

**A Re-presentation of Object Phenomena  
Through the Medium of Painting**

*Michael*

By John Vella, Dip.FA, BA(Hons.)

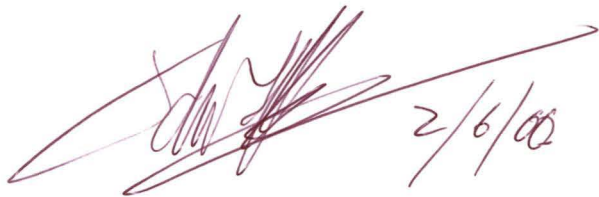
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Submitted in the fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts (Research)  
University of Tasmania February 2000

Signed statement of originality

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John Vella

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## Abstract

Through the development of a series of object/paintings (*Paintjects*), this thesis examines processes of abstraction, presentation and reception.

Ideas concerning the status of painting as image (pictorial space) as opposed to object (actual space/surface) and the means by which these various characteristics are discerned and articulated, forms both an historical and conceptual zone within which this project functions.

Various painting issues such as the pictorial scale, content and composition of non-objective painting have both personally and historically become problematic due to their arbitrariness. (These same issues have also been used in the vanguard of claims for the death of painting as a medium.) This project has sought to negotiate these 'problems' through imposing a series of limitations derived from the placement of an object behind the canvas.

Here, the various functions, memories and appearances of an object, provide options for both the selection of materials, and the processes through which they are engaged.

This simultaneous presence and proximity of art object (painting) and its source, (object behind/subject) creates the tension of the *Paintject* where the viewer is made to witness a closing of the gap between resemblance and identity; sign and signified.



The aim of the *Paintject* is then to question the relationship between the object and its representation (its semiological status) through setting the object in a state of oscillation between what it is and what it seems to be.

Within the context of this project, painting then becomes not just a space, but a place where the traditional relationship between the art object and its subject - and the experience of both - is transformed.

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## Introduction:

### Saint Marcel

In a dark corner of the church of Santa Cecilia in Sao Paulo lies the mesmerising image of the child saint Santa Donata. Her prostrate position combined with the uncanny anatomical veracity and naturalistic colouring with which she is rendered, gives viewers the charged sensation of watching someone sleep. The priest of this parish once confided to my grandmother that every two or three years, they had to open the glass casket in which the image rests, to trim her hair and fingernails because they had not stopped growing since the image arrived from Rome ... The explanation of this miraculous phenomenon, legend has it, is that beneath the waxen surface of the statue is the actual body of the saint, preserved by a remarkable embalming technique. Its surface is meticulously worked to render the image true to life. In the 1930's, the image had to be encased in glass because skeptical visitors, drawn by the legend, would poke at the relic to see if it would bleed. Far removed from the Platonic geometry of the standard coffin, here we find a being encased in its own mimetic image.<sup>1</sup> \*

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\* Footnotes will be found at the end of each section e.g. see p.14 for #1.

The... isolation of the odd artifacts of our culture... harks back to many artists' efforts to embalm objects we take for granted, as if they were to be treasured rare archaeological finds,... Duchamp... may have set this twentieth century form of taxidermy into motion by transforming... anything from a urinal to a bicycle wheel into a mysterious witness of our civilisation....<sup>2</sup>

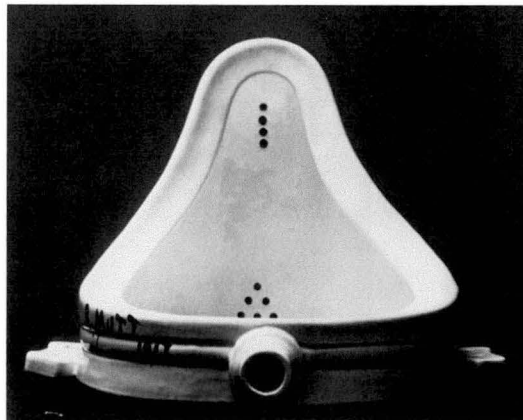


Fig.1,  
Marcel Duchamp, *FOUNTAIN*,  
33.5 cm high, 1964. Fabricated replica of  
readymade. Fourth version by Arturo Schwarz after lost  
original of 1917.

## Enter the *Paintject*

This project began with the residue, both physically and conceptually of my honours submission, which questioned the picture/painting phenomenon through the third dimension.

The honours project, personified as a character named *JacksonJudd* (a hybrid of Donald Judd, the Minimalist and Jackson Pollock the Abstract Expressionist), was concerned with creating a zone where the intuitive making of Pollock could sit comfortably with the prefabrication of Judd; a space where picture could become object.

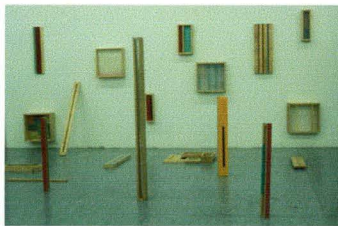


Fig.2,  
*MEET JACKSONJUDD*,  
Mixed Media,  
Dimensions variable, 1996.

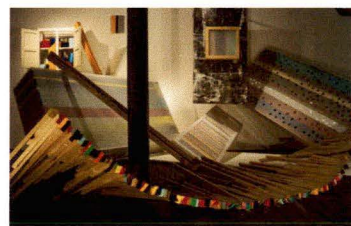


Fig.3,  
*MEET JACKSONJUDD*,  
Mixed Media,  
Dimensions variable, 1996.

*JacksonJudd* began with a decision to start the 'work' in the workshop. Previously, depending on the scale of image to be painted, I had built stretchers to a predetermined set of dimensions. In this instance I tackled the stretcher as an independent object in its own right. The stretcher thus surpassed its role as simply a support for a painting and became literally a sculpture, where with materials such as drafting films and adhesive tapes, I created 3D pictorial effects.<sup>3</sup>

This current investigation was motivated by a desire to return to making paintings and re-defining what a painting can be in the process. Once again the stretcher was the catalyst: I stretched some canvas over a stretcher as any other painter would, and then with a piece of cardboard, dragged some black paint across the fabric surface. What emerged was an image of the stretcher behind, which became the painting (fig.4). This painting enabled me to address (if not resolve) many of the issues in painting (more specifically non-objective painting) that had become problematic for me.<sup>4</sup>

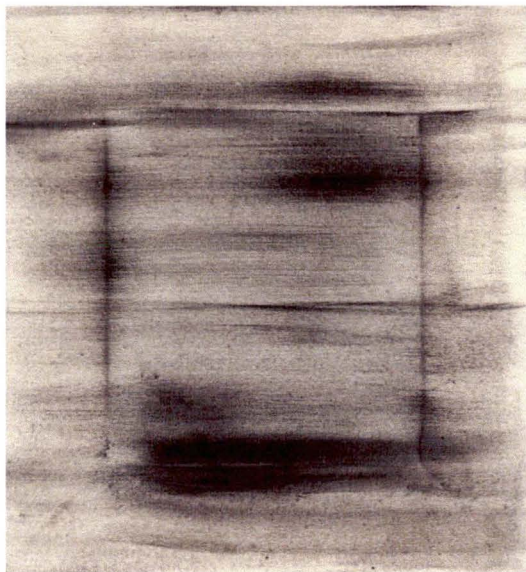


Fig.4,  
*UNTITLED*,  
Acrylic on canvas and stretcher, 30 x 23cm, 1997.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and stretcher*.<sup>5</sup>

Issues such as: **Composition** - where to put a mark, **Content** - what the work is about and **Scale** - how big or small a piece should be (**C.C.S**) had become *problematic*; as they seemed so subservient to an aesthetic and subjective approach which was (to me) where abstract painting was most at risk of collapsing into meaningless gesturings.

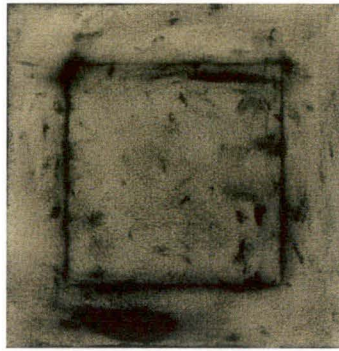


Fig.5,  
*UNTITLED*,  
Acrylic on canvas and stretcher,  
30 x 23 cm, 1997.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and  
stretcher*.



Fig.6,  
*UNTITLED*,  
Acrylic on canvas and stretcher,  
63.5 x 35 cm, 1997. Retitled: *Acrylic on  
canvas and stretcher*.

To return to the early works in this project (figs.4/5/6) was to realise that the process in itself found a way around the *problems* but in order to continue painting that way I would have had either to endlessly repeat the same composition, or make stretchers that were more complex. The manipulation of the stretcher to aesthetic ends would dilute its form/function connection, (thereby allowing the *problems* of **C.C.S** to resurface under a different guise) and as I had no desire to repeat the same composition, I attempted to find another way.<sup>6</sup>

The next body of work extended this process by redefining the role of the stretcher; no longer was it simply a support for an image but a part of a unit within which things could be presented. I began to place objects in the space behind the paintings: louvred doors, cutlery trays, bread crates etc. and painted on the canvas surfaces stretched directly over them.



Once the object was selected, (as with the stretcher) pictorial issues of composition, scale and content were then no longer purely arbitrary, as the object performed as a template that remained present behind the canvas.<sup>7</sup>

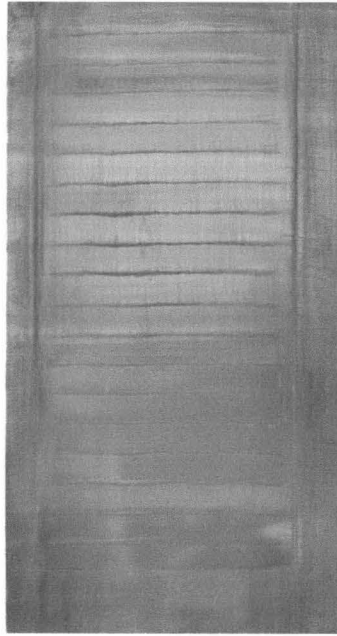


Fig.7,  
*ONE LOUVRED DOOR*,  
Acrylic on satin and louvered door,  
53 x 28.5 x 2.5 cm, 1997.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on satin and  
louvered door*.

The size of the object, its appearance and design, defined the Scale and Composition of the painting, whilst Content became an assimilation of the object's physical and functional reality, the image and the exchange between the two.<sup>8</sup> C.C.S. then became integrated into the process of making these objects,<sup>9</sup> rather than being subservient to an arbitrary, abstract aesthetic that had (for me) become redundant.

It took me a while to see the importance of this discovery. In an exhibition entitled *Object Poverty*,<sup>10</sup> I displayed these covered objects along with exposed found objects in wall based arrangements intended to perform as pictures; however the arrangements were once again so arbitrary that they simply

returned the work to the same issues (albeit through objects) that I had attempted to resolve.



Fig.8,  
*OBJECT POVERTY*,  
Installation, Access Contemporary  
Art Gallery, Sydney, 1997.



Fig.9,  
*OBJECT POVERTY*,  
Installation, Access Contemporary  
Art Gallery, Sydney, 1997.

Reflecting on this body of work it became ironically clear that I was communicating in a confused dialogue of bits and pieces calculated to be pleasing to the eye; a form of meaningless gesturing with things, as opposed to marks.

However at this early stage, *Object Poverty* played a crucial role in the development of this project, as it provided me with the opportunity to critically evaluate the work to date.

This critiquing of the project became the catalyst that allowed me to see the potential of certain aspects of the exhibition and subsequently enabled me to commit myself to making paintings with objects behind them.

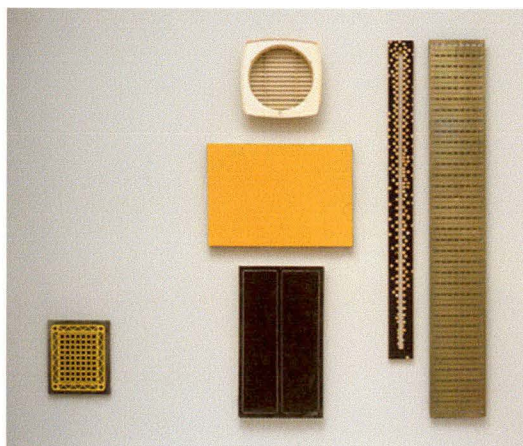


Fig.10,  
*OBJECT 2*  
(*OBJECT POVERTY*),  
Mixed media – six objects,  
159 x 183 cm, 1997.

Considering these works, I realised that through an attempt to solve the problems of painting, not only had they translated the picture into a cover, but that the works consisted of odd juxtapositionings of so many opposing forces placed in tension, that constituted a different type of art object.<sup>11</sup> Comprising neither paintings that are simply objects, nor objects that are simply paintings, this is a new category of object, that I have named the *Paintject*.<sup>12</sup>

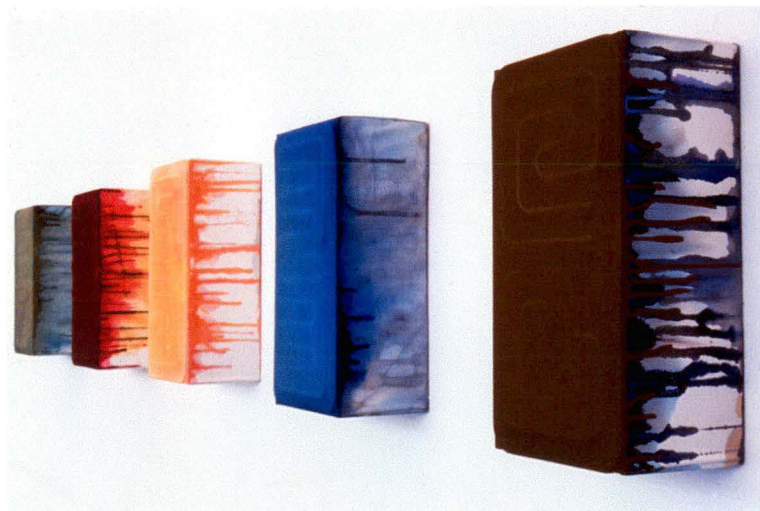


Fig.11,  
*BOIL, STEAM, SIMMER, POACH, FRY,*  
Acrylic on canvas and stove elements, each unit 40.5 x 21.5 x 14cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and stove elements.*

The making of the *Paintject* begins at garage sales and second hand markets, where I select these objects. Here (without paint), I make critical decisions that determine how the work proceeds and begin to think about how to incorporate the object.<sup>13</sup> Do I construct a deep box around it? Should I just stretch directly over it? How will the viewer respond (or not) to a bath etc.?<sup>14</sup>

Viewing these objects on site, I engaged less with their *Objectness* and instead saw how they would respond when behind the canvas. Their actual (three-dimensional) surfaces and designs were transformed mentally into (two-dimensional) marks as I began to see through the objects as things (in the present), and see them instead as images (in the future).

This temporal projection continues to evolve through my attempts to preserve the original state of the objects (through not cleaning them) so as to allow their histories (verified by the alibis of their surfaces) to remain intact.<sup>15</sup> Not cleaning the surfaces also introduced the possibility of these mundane, but also dirty, objects ending up in an art gallery or a home as decoration. There is an interrogation/subversion of the concept of status implied in these acts; if not a perversion in the pleasure of inverting the domestic approach to cleanliness; as to decorate a house with something dirty, contradicts the most basic of domestic conventions.<sup>16</sup>

*Placing the object behind does not remove all of the formal painting issues (such as what colour or texture to use) but provides a framework within which their selection is rendered less arbitrary. The Paintject then provides a zone within which I can respond to the 'accidents' of paint, through the object itself.<sup>17</sup> Aesthetic decisions are then made through the object as a form of collaboration.<sup>18</sup>*

*Whilst artists such as Frank Stella attempted to negotiate the problems of painting 'through eliminating improvisation on the canvas itself...';<sup>19</sup> I am interested in translating the painting into a site of improvisation, which through its context ceases to be problematic.*

*In this project, the strict limitations of Stella's stretcher are exchanged for the dimensions of the object behind, and are made malleable in so far as I decide how to include, or exclude them from the picture itself.*

*The blank canvas in this project is then anything but a tabula rasa.<sup>20</sup>*



Fig.12,  
*BREAD AND MILK CRATES,*  
Circular Quay, Sydney, 1998.

At this early stage of the project it was important to me that the works could perform as *paintings*. The rectilinear shape of objects such as cutlery trays, louvred doors, and bread crates, fitted comfortably into the notion of a painting as a geometric form on a wall, and their impressions (mediated through their structures) resembled the grids of Piet Mondrian or Peter Halley<sup>21</sup> and so fitted neatly into familiar genres of abstraction.<sup>22</sup>



Fig.13,  
*ONE CUTLERY TRAY  
TOUCHED BY A PIECE OF THE  
BERLIN WALL,*  
Acrylic on canvas and cutlery tray,  
42 x 33.5 x 4 cm, 1997.



Fig.14,  
*ONE CUTLERY TRAY TOUCHED BY A  
SCREEN DOOR,*  
Acrylic on canvas and cutlery tray,  
42 x 33.5 x 4 cm, 1997.

Early experiments with the cutlery trays ranged from simply allowing their structures to appear through the canvas, to manipulating and even layering the impressions.



A later series focussed on *the Painting* as a combination of touches, from a variety of objects (such as vitamin pills, screen doors and pieces of the Berlin Wall [figs.13/14]).

These painterly investigations led to experiments incorporating the paintings as units determined by the dimensions of the objects themselves and a variety of domestic storage scenarios.

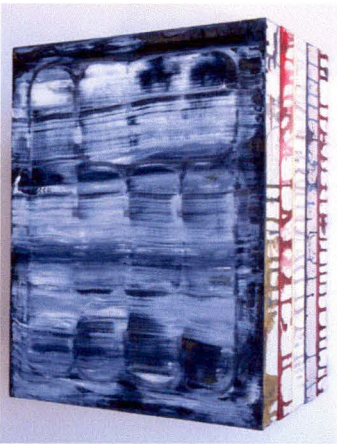


Fig.15,  
*CUTLERY TRAY STACK I*,  
Acrylic on canvas and cutlery trays,  
34 x 33.5 x 42 cm, 1997.



Fig.16,  
*ACRYLIC ON CANVAS AND CUTLERY TRAYS*  
*(HUNG IN THE FORMAT OF A KITCHEN CUPBOARD)*,  
Mixed media on canvas and cutlery trays, 120 x 177 x 4.5 cm, 1997.

The decision to purchase a small object; a power point, transformed the entire project. Once covered, the power point - unlike the cutlery trays and bread crate works - presented *the Image* (in a photographic sense) of a familiar object. The viewer, recognising the power point in the painting, conjured up their personal experience of it; and so the functional, mnemonic and visual reality of the object, altered the affective response to the work.<sup>23</sup>

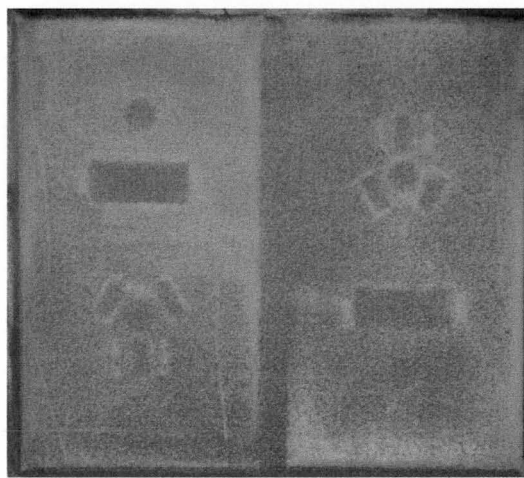


Fig.17,  
*ONE POWER POINT*,  
Acrylic on canvas and power point,  
11.5 x 13 x 4.5 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and power point*.

This defined the new criteria for the objects that I purchased and determined that it was no longer enough that a thing looked right; it had to *be* right on many other levels.<sup>24</sup>



INTRODUCTION

SAINT MARCEL

- 1 Muniz, V, 'Surface Tension', *Parkett* 46, 1996, [p 46]
- 2 Rosenblum, R, 'Notes on Jeff Koons,' S Coles & R. Violette, (ed) *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, London Anthony d'Offay Gallery and Thames and Hudson, 1992, [p 19]

ENTER THE PAINTJECT

- 3 A parallel European movement to Pop developed under the title of New Realism.  
New Realism (attempted to) function through the found object, the symbolic and often used the trope of accumulation of the same object to develop a form of three dimensional picture  
The prominent members were Yves Klein, Tinguely, Arman and Spoerri, Pierre Restany  
See also the French movement Supports/Surfaces 'the artists of Supports/Surfaces made a point of using only the traditionally constituent elements of painting' the artists of Supports/Surfaces were primarily concerned with the problems of painting'.  
M. Raphael Rubenstein, 'The Painting Undone,' *Art in America*, Nov 1991, [p 138]
- 4 Not long after my undergraduate course at the National Art School (Sydney) had ended, I was asked to make a painting that looked like one that I had already sold Working away on the commission in my parents' carport, I had a simple revelation that when I painted, I was putting colours and textures here and there, and that when it looked right, I would stop and then do another one I knew that essentially my work was often being purchased because it matched curtains and lounges (This bothered me because my work did not actually demand to be seen in any other way, it was essentially all appearance orchestrated so as to be visually pleasing to the eye) Beyond 'looking better' there seemed to be no reason why one colour, texture, composition or scale was more successful than another These aspects of a picture - the essential elements - then became in a sense problematic See also Frank Stella's negotiation of the open ended nature of Abstract Expressionism 'One aspect of Abstract Expressionism that troubled Stella was the ambivalence artists felt about considering a picture finished, an attitude associated primarily with the "open-ended" aspect of the picture making process espoused by de Kooning . [through using the limits of the canvas to dictate composition, and limiting his palette and mark] Stella eliminated improvisation on the canvas itself, the concept of the finished picture as the realisation of a pictorial idea - good or bad - ceased to be problematic' Rubin WS, *Frank Stella*, New York The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970, [p 13]
- 5 Note that many of the works in this project have been retitled for reasons that I will outline later. Original titles have been retained in the exegesis so as to describe their development and impact through the course of the project
- 6 It is worth noting that I am reconsidering the prospect of returning to these works (figs 4/5/6) nearly three years since I decided to 'find another way'

- 7 A precedent for this link with object to painting, and object as painting, can be found in Robert Rauschenberg's work *BED* (fig 43) 'With *BED* [Rauschenberg] made a stretcher for the quilt, just as though it were a canvas, and started to paint....' Tomkins, C., *The Bride and the Bachelors*, Great Britain Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1965, [p 215] Rauschenberg painted on the quilt and so used the quilt as a canvas to make a work that both referred to, and was, a bed In contrast, the work in this project is never a function of painting directly onto the object
- 8 Early works involved the stretching of canvas directly over the objects thus completely doing away with the stretcher However as I wanted something that could somehow be accepted as a painting I found the literal presence of a covered object to be too obviously something else - sculptural etc
- 9 'These objects' includes the painting construct (as stretcher and canvas), the painting as image, and the object behind it
- 10 A solo exhibition with Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney, 1998
- 11 These 'forces' comprise of terms such as the mass produced, the designed, the original, the found object and the *Readymade*.
- 12 The '*Paintject*' label has also been employed so as to avoid confusion within this paper Note that the term '*Paintject*' includes the painting construct (as stretcher and canvas), the painting as image, and the object behind it, together as one unit.
- 13 As evidenced in my sketchbooks (that are filled with annotated sketches of the layout and construction of various works) the *Paintject* is a function of the diagram These drawings enable me to think through the physical logistics of the works, and in no way determine the end result, nor introduce the possibility of complete prefabrication The true experiments and sketches in this project are not to be found in the journals or notebooks, but in the many speculative works (three-dimensional sketches) that often litter the studio.
- 14 The familiar dimension of the *Paintject* is a function of the type of objects that I select The generic quality of these objects means that everyone has (more than likely) at some time or other experienced them in the real world, which allows them to project onto/through it. If I covered a Philippe Starck designer object, fewer people would respond in the same way, as they would not know (or have known) the object intimately. This 'boxing' is allied to the format of the rubbing ' a rubbing most often takes the format of a rectangular unit capturing a given figure or object along with a patch of its background, [meaning that] individual images [and in this case objects] are framed ' R Krauss, 'Perpetual Inventory', essay in *Robert Rauschenberg a Retrospective*, W Hopps, & S Davidson, New York Solomon Guggenheim Publications, 1998, [p 216]. The distinction between the *Paintject* and the rubbing will be articulated later.
- 15 Note that more often than not I purchased second hand objects as opposed to new ones, because they had been used I am interested in the ramifications of the contact that results from this 'use' and will explain how (and why) later on in the exegesis
- 16 Underlying this is a personal desire to somehow upset the logic of what can be considered as being *beautiful* I often find the residues of the processes of living to be more beautiful and moving than the things presented for display intended *to beautify*.

- Where in the early days it bothered me to have my paintings used as decoration (see Enter the *Paintject* note #4), now it excites me in that the surface/decorative aspect is not the whole work. So to engage with the *Paintject* only on the level of appearances is to miss the point.
- 17 'Not only did [Stella] wish to avoid the mechanical appearance of the tracing and fairing of geometric art, but he wished frankly to reveal the tracking of the brush with whatever awkwardness that might entail. Such an approach constituted for him more than an affirmation of anti-elegance, it revealed an insistence upon the importance of the conception of the picture as opposed to the refinements of its execution.' W S Rubin, *Frank Stella*, [p 32]
- Similarly, I am not interested in my works being primarily displays of a technical prowess.
- 18 In 1968 Carl Andre commented 'the one thing I learned in my work is that to make the work I wanted to, you couldn't impose properties on materials, you have to reveal the properties of the material.' Andre quoted in D. Batchelor, *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)* London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, [p 60]. Andre will be discussed later. See again Robert Rauschenberg who has continually referred to his process as a collaboration with objects and materials. Using objects to make marks could be seen as an attempt to negotiate what Duchamp described as the artist's paw. 'I wanted to get away from *la patte* (the artist's touch, his personal style, his "paw") and from all that retinal painting....' Duchamp quoted in C. Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors*, [p 24]
- 19 Rubin W.S., *Frank Stella*, [p 13]. Frank Stella will be discussed in detail later.
- 20 Italics denote journal excerpt.
- 21 I am assuming that the reader is already familiar with the work of Mondrian.
- The work of Peter Halley will be discussed in detail later. See fig 46.
- 22 Whilst not being literally 'flat', objects such as cutlery trays and bread crates have flat faces and a depth that is not dissimilar to the depth of a thick stretcher. This connects with Jasper Johns' approach. 'The motifs Johns chose – flags, targets, letter and number grids – were in themselves flat; this led to the possibility of making the field of the motif identical with the field of the canvas...' W S Rubin, *Frank Stella*, [p 12]. See also Gary Hume's Door series which 'seeks a motif equivalent to the constraints of a flat support.' 'Definitely Something', Lionel Bovier on Gary Hume, *Parkett* 48, 1999, [p. 19].
- Hume will be discussed in detail later.
- 23 'In 1934, Andre Breton defined Duchamp's *Readymades* as "Manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of objects of art through the choice of the artist." Unlike the surrealist *objet trouve* which is a common object chosen for its accidental aesthetic value, the readymade has no aesthetic value according to Duchamp.' Breton quoted in C. Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors*, [p 26]. Note that this is a debatable claim as the *readymades* did accrue an aesthetic response. The point to make is that Duchamp did not select the objects for their esthetic delight. 'The choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference, accompanied at the time by a total lack of good or bad taste... in fact a total anesthesia.' Marcel Duchamp quoted in 'Photography Painting and the Real, The Question of Landscape in the Painting of Gerhard Richter,' in J P. Antoine, *Gerhard Richter Photography, Painting and the Real*, Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1995., [p 56]. In addition to the reasons already mentioned the *Paintject* objects are selected to a certain degree for their aesthetic value.

The compositions/arrangements of the objects that I select, are a function of their inherent structural configurations and a desire to be 'pleasing' in the aesthetic sense. So the aesthetic dimension is present, but mediated through the object.

- 24 A frustration with the brittle nature of cotton duck canvas led me at this stage to experiment with using various fabrics to cover the objects. I settled on a fabric known as thermal lining, a thin, suede-coated canvas (also known as *curtain blackout*) which being coated in suede removed the problem of the weave. The 'problem' with the weave can perhaps be summed up in this quote discussing a viewing of the Shroud of Turin (fig 85): 'Yet this stain is in its physical conditions as in its perceptual effects inseparable from the texture of its support. Looking closely at a stain of the Shroud of Turin results . . . in a total loss of perspective. The weave "eats up" all effect of outline, and even tonal distinction.' G. Didi-Huberman, 'The Index of the Absent Wound Monograph on a Stain,' trans. T. Repensek, *October* 29, Summer 1984, [p 69]
- Note that in my material descriptions (subsequently my titles) I have referred to the *thermal lining* as 'canvas'.
-

## Objects and the Domestic Surface:

### Screen Door

*Both your eye and your body engage with the object.*

*The object is the thickness of a wall and the size and shape of a door.*

*It projects out from the wall and yet presents itself as a window through it.*

*It hangs in the position that a door would be.*

*A grey, greenish, yellow stain swathes over the curves on its surface.*

*Spills and stains flow over the edges of the object connecting the image to the wall upon which it hangs.*

*The image appears as something dissolved and erased.*

*Like a large sponge the surface draws you not just to it but through it into the space of the picture.*

*The image itself belies a presence and an essence of transformation - of shadows, ghosts and residues.*

*There seems to be something pushing the canvas from behind.*

*You can sense that something is there but it is not actually visible.*

*The object reveals itself to be somehow familiar and ordinary and yet it seems estranged.*

*You want to touch it but you cannot.*



Fig.18,  
*SCREEN DOOR*,  
 Acrylic on canvas and screen door,  
 200 x 78.5 x 16 cm, 1998.  
 Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and screen door*.

*You read the title: Screen Door, and the description of the materials in the catalogue: Acrylic on canvas and screen door.*

*Now you realise that the 'curves' are those of a screen door that is actually present behind the painting. Confronted by a truth you can not verify you are forced to deal with the presence and you believe; or instead, you question.*

*Now you recognise the thing, the image itself is no longer officially abstract.*

*The door is closed, however it opens up memories for you.*

*You stand in front of it and yet you are in front of something else (another door) that is somewhere else (another place).<sup>1 \*</sup>*

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\* Footnotes to this section p.39.

## Souvenir

... the unfamiliar, the mysterious, gives rise to thought, whereas the depiction of familiar things provokes a... response... based not on reason but recollection....<sup>2</sup>



Fig.19,  
*MUM'S STORAGE UNIT,*  
*(LIVING ROOM),*  
8 Yallambee Court,  
Baulkham Hills, Sydney, N.S.W.

Sentimental objects such as the souvenir and the trophy are mechanisms that are measured by our proximity to them and their proximity to (or contact with) the event. They conjure up a moment because they were, at a certain point in time, close to it, and so often what they signify, not what they look like, is the reason that we keep and display them. Someone else's souvenir usually means nothing much to us;<sup>3</sup> the trophy that the next-door neighbour won for his soccer grand-final (that we did not see) doesn't allow us to conjure up that specific moment.<sup>4</sup>

The narrative associated with 'what they signify' is sometimes made *visible* through the marks left by a particular event or action. In this instance the mark becomes a souvenir within the souvenir, as it refers to a particular moment within a particular event.

These relationships, between the visible and invisible aspects of the souvenir, are engaged through the *Paintject* as a means of appropriating and re-contextualising our particular experiences of objects, and the narratives we associate with them. To this end, the visible signs of engaging with the world are rendered invisible, by the cover, displaying the objects in disguise.<sup>5</sup>

Covered and not cleaned, the (mass produced) object behind retains the *marks* of former ownership, (which make it unique) and assumes a dual *uniqueness* through its inclusion in the *Paintject*, as only that particular object can ever be there. However a paradox emerges as the viewers see the cover (a version of the original object mediated through paint) and are then made to engage with their own particular experience of the very object from which they are estranged.<sup>6</sup>

This proximity - of image/object/viewer - within the *Paintject* then appropriates the cycle of the souvenir, but becomes a very different trigger, as it serves to signify the object that the viewer has previously seen or made contact with. The 'souvenir' in this context thus becomes the moment itself where the object of sentiment is not the object they view, but the object conjured up in their memory.<sup>7</sup>

The tension of the *Paintject* then lies in its development of a site (mediated through the simultaneous presence of the object and its image) where the thought, associated with the reception of the estranged, is made to coalesce with the memory of the familiar.



## Stuffed Birds



Fig.20,  
*MALTESE HOME INTERIOR*,  
Melleiha, Malta.

As a souvenir, the stuffed bird represents one of the most bizarre trophies that a man (I do not know any women that do this) can collect. To my shame it is a very Maltese<sup>8</sup> thing to do: go out, shoot some birds, stuff them and place them in a glass cabinet, where you can admire their plumage, or the *real-ness* of their posture, on the piece of tree that you glued them to.

In the case of a stuffed animal, the inside is simply a scaffold that props up the skin in the 'right' places. This skin perpetrates an ironic disguise that attempts to defeat the 'look' of something dead.

The stuffed animal thus becomes the surrogate version of itself when it was alive and so it exists as an inanimate index.

When you reflect upon the fact that the birds were shot out of the sky by their 'owners', there seems to be a strange kind of relationship that develops. The shooter displays his birds as he would any object in his house that he likes or is proud of. He will know the details of the creatures, their habits etc., and dust them to keep them 'in shape.'

So there is a type of 'caring' relationship, that maybe requires the kind of stasis that death (transforming the animate into the inanimate) brings with it.



Fig.21,  
*DETAIL OF DISPLAY CABINET IN MALTESE HOME,*  
Melleiha, Malta.

An object held still and presented as an item of display, then contains within it a desire to be contemplated and thus communicates in an alternative dialect.<sup>9</sup>

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## The Cast and the Photograph

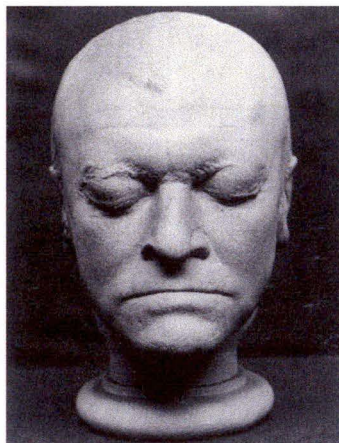


Fig.22,  
J.S. Deville,  
*LIFE MASK OF WILLIAM BLAKE*,  
Plaster, h.27.6 cm,1807.

... the Head of William Blake... was cast from life.  
What affected me as a child was feeling the presence of  
someone through the skin, where the contact with the skin with  
whatever was registering it, the impression, was not really as  
important an idea somehow of a pressure behind the skin which  
was both physical and psychological... In a way the casting  
process in that instance... is a way of getting beyond the  
minutiae of surface incident and instantly into that idea of  
presence....<sup>10</sup>

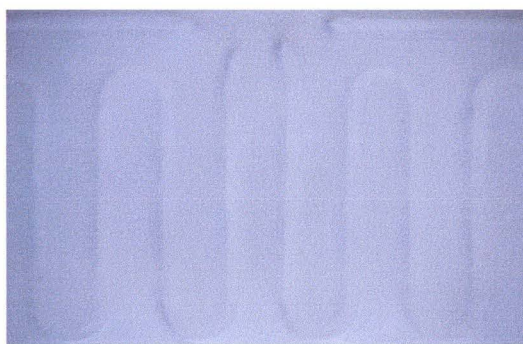


Fig.23,  
*ONE STOVE ELEMENT*  
(DETAIL),  
Acrylic on canvas and stove  
element, 40.5 x 21.5 x 14 cm,  
1998. Retitled: *Acrylic on  
canvas and stove element*.

What had formerly been the city of Pompeii assumed an entirely changed appearance, but not a living one; it now appeared rather to become completely petrified in dead immobility. Yet out of it stirred a feeling that death was beginning to talk... the entombed city represented the suspension of history and the revelation of the invisible... it was the trace of a woman's breast visible as a negative impression left in the ash, a macabre *nature morte* that provided the erotic subtext to a mediation on the suspension of life in the ruins of the present....<sup>11</sup>



Fig.24,  
Allan McCollum,  
*THE DOG FROM POMPEII*,  
(Installation view), plaster casts,  
at the Galeria Weber, Madrid, 1991.

The photograph brought with it the simulacral notion of the mirage, of a reality that had been engulfed within its own technology of imitation, a fall into the hall of mirrors, a disappearance into a labyrinth in which original and copy are indistinguishable.<sup>12</sup>

*I wanted my paintings to have the objectivity of a photograph... where the object has to be physically in front of the camera for the image to appear... at the same time, I wanted the paint to show its own process, like the way a photographic print appears in a darkroom tray... this required an exorbitant realism where (I) had to trap the object within its own image.*<sup>13</sup>

The *Paintject* is not purely about simulating the seen reality through studying the effects of light on a surface. These works are instead to do with capturing an object as an image through contact, and hence I would suggest that they have more in common with Henri Cartier-Bresson's so called *Decisive Moment* (the photograph) than with the hand of Van Gogh or Vermeer (the painting).

For the photograph to occur the object must, at the moment of capture, have been present with the camera; however the painter can imagine the subject (at a distance) thereby allowing the painting to manifest a representation, without the actual presence of the subject.

In the case of the *Paintject*, the object behind is presented as if to be photographed; under the canvas (as opposed to the lights of the photographic studio), and similarly attached to the gaze of the canvas as lens. The *Paintject* is then paradoxical as it uses paint to make a painting, but somehow requires and makes use of the phenomenological conditions (the presence of the object) for the act of photographing to occur.<sup>14</sup>



However less like a traditional camera and more like a polaroid, the *Paintject* develops the image on site, in the presence of the subject. In this scenario, the moment of the trace normally rendered invisible by separation is somehow frozen in time enabling the viewer to witness the moment of capture.<sup>15</sup> This compression of the subject with its impression disables the mobility<sup>16</sup> of the trace; as in this case the painting relies on a contact with the subject, and so takes on not only the form of the object behind, but also its weight.<sup>17</sup> In this instance the painting bears not just a visual, but also this physical indexical relationship to its source; and so the *Paintject* exchanges traditional notions of achieving a picture as an image for an existence as a painting derived model of the object encased within it.



Fig.25,  
*ONE STOVE ELEMENT*,  
Acrylic on canvas and stove  
element, 40.5 x 21.5 x 14 cm,  
1998. Retitled: *Acrylic on  
canvas and stove element*.



Fig.26,  
Marcel Duchamp,  
*FEUILLE DE VIGNE  
FEMELLE*  
(*FEMALE FIG LEAF*),  
Galvanised plaster,  
9 x 14 x 12.5 cm, 1950.

As a three dimensional trace of sorts, the *Paintject*<sup>18</sup> could be perceived to engage in the manipulation of the cast paradigm, which has a variety of historical and contemporary precedents.

In the historical case, Marcel Duchamp often manipulated the cast, or an impression of an object, so as to separate the visible world into 'appearances' and 'apparitions,' that he characterised as being like 'cast' to 'mould'.<sup>19</sup> For Duchamp the cast was both a means of transforming the object's relationship to its own representation, and a sidestepping of the encumbrances of the artists' hand.<sup>20</sup>

A more recent application of the cast exists in the work of Rachel Whiteread. Following on from the Duchampian derived early investigations of Bruce Nauman,<sup>21</sup> her practice involves reversing the cast to mould relationship. Whiteread is not concerned with the conceptual manoeuvrings of extracting the artist's hand, so much as she is with finding another means of estranging the mundane. The negative spaces, in and around often domestic objects, are filled with materials such as cement, resin and rubber, and the object itself is removed. Whiteread then engages the cast as a means of producing the one original trace, however her 'original' is not the object itself, but the space around it made object. This process reveals the spaces inside a mattress, or under a sink, as independent, three-dimensional forms which retain the minor surface indentations (traces) of the original object's touch.<sup>22</sup>



Fig.27,  
Bruce Nauman,  
*A CAST OF THE SPACE UNDER  
MY CHAIR*, Concrete,  
44.5 x 39.1 x 37.1 cm, 1965-68.



Fig.28,  
Rachel Whiteread,  
*UNTITLED (BATH)*,  
Plaster and glass,  
103 x 209.5 x 105.5 cm, 1990.

The absence/presence exchange of Whiteread, becomes in the case of the *Paintject*, a form of double presence, where both the object and its trace remain integrated into a single construct. Here the painting, (as the cover that enables this dual presence), substitutes the minor surface indentations upon the surface of the original object, for the traces that occur through the canvas from behind. Through these means, form is retained, but subdued, enabling the characterisation of representation - as being 'like a veil draped over matter, concealing as much as it reveals...' <sup>23</sup> - to find its literal translation.



Fig.29,  
*T.V., (work in progress)*,  
Canvas and television,  
80 x 70 x 31.5 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and  
television.*



## Cleaning: The Articulation of Surface

*I remember as a child when my mother would go crazy if I forgot to use a coaster on the table. Without a coaster or a tablecloth, you would get this wonderful mark under the coffee mug where the heat or moisture transferred onto the wood. The extreme of this form of exchange was when I traced a title page for a school project without putting something protective underneath, and left the cover of the book Treasure Island permanently engraved on the dining table.*

*My mother bought a new table with a beautiful wooden surface, but she also bought an ugly brown, padded cover that she used to protect the table from further acts of 'creation.'*

*You could not see the surface of the table any more; its appearance was thus sacrificed to preserve its beauty. Only when visitors came around did the table get revealed in all of its virginal glory as an item not of use but of display.*

These rituals became regular points of tension for my family. They were about welcoming people into our home but they were also about being judged not only by who we were, but by how we lived. Our environment and thus our objects spoke about us. We sought to control our environment so as to control the response to it, (or at the very least limit it within a range) which was not just about the things themselves but the way in which they were kept and presented.



Fig.30,  
*MY PARENTS' BATHROOM  
CABINET*,  
8 Yallambee Court, Baulkham Hills,  
Sydney, N.S.W.



Fig.31,  
*THINGS ON MY PARENTS'  
TELEVISION*,  
8 Yallambee Court, Baulkham Hills,  
Sydney, N.S.W.

Cleaning, as a mode of presentation, requires that we make direct contact with the object.<sup>24</sup> In the act of cleaning, we allow our touch to be mediated through one object onto another, and attempt to eliminate both the surface stains etc. as well as the trace of our own efforts to remove them. These cleaning actions are duplicated across the surfaces of my paintings as I scrape, scrub and wipe. However rather than attempt to remove or erase, in the act of painting I seek to articulate both the movement resulting from the action itself, and the reaction between the materials and the canvas surface. As an object, the *Paintject* then lies both revealed and obscured by the residues of its own transformation.

The surface of an object conceals the mass of the object from us; it is also the part of the object revealed to our sight, it is an area where we are vulnerable to deception and also a site poignantly ripe for the development of fiction.

The surface becomes a tenuous site where fiction and reality struggle with notions of subjectivity and objectivity to find boundaries or to determine difference.<sup>25</sup>



Fig.32,  
*STUFFED AND COVERED BIRDS*,  
In the archives of the Tasmanian  
Museum and Art Gallery, 1999.



Fig.33,  
Rene Magritte,  
*LES AMANTS [THE LOVERS]*,  
Oil on canvas, 54 x 73 cm, 1928.

As with mum's table, the act of covering a thing can involve an element of protection and also reduce the need to clean. The surrogate surface of the cover is left to collect the dust, or take the blows, that would otherwise fall on the object beneath it, and so to cover a thing (like to clean it) implies a state of preservation and protection; an attempt to delay decay.<sup>26</sup> However there is also often an aesthetic dimension to the cover as the process of obscuring something can also serve to embellish and transform it.

Through new materials such as *Formicas*, laminates and veneers, spaces and their contents became decorated, blended, sanitised and sealed. Floor coverings went up and over skirtings, thereby dissolving wall to floor junctions. Modernism's tropes of the grid and the stripe (along with myriad other motifs) were employed as patterns, translated through colours, that formed the double camouflage of decoration. I say *double* as these patterns, as decorative elements, assumed the dual function of making surfaces appear prettier but also cleaner; as they served to hide the dirt.<sup>27</sup>

In the case of the veneer, these patterns acquired yet another level of deceit. Mum's first table (the one I had damaged) was really only skin deep. The table appeared to be made from pine but, with time, as the surface peeled back, revealed itself to be a veneer obscuring a core of chip-board. The veneer surface allowed the object to perform as a pine table through the mimicry of the look of one, enabling the table to acquire a prestige (and a price to go with it) way beyond its true chipboard value.

In painting, prefabricated imitation textures made their appearance at precisely the moment when painting itself was turning away from the reproductive depiction of reality.

In the *papiers colles* of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, and in the still lifes of Juan Gris, Gino Severini, Kurt Schwitters, and others, cheap simulations assumed the task previously performed by painterly imitation....

In these paintings, wood-grain, brass nameplates, ...greasy bank notes, etc. are juxtaposed as pure texture, reformulating the enigma of painting and compelling us to turn our attention from the objects themselves to the solving of that enigma....<sup>28</sup>



Fig.34,  
Pablo Picasso,  
*STILL-LIFE WITH CHAIR CANING*,  
Oil and oil cloth and rope frame,  
27 x 35 cm, 1912.

As the true state of the object behind the facade of the painting remains perpetually in question, the *Paintject*, like the veneer, engages surface as a zone of possible and actual deceit. However the merging of the object/subject and image through the cover is, in the *Paintject*, motivated neither by a need to protect the object nor to render it more hygienically clean but to re-articulate the reality of the object (and by implication, meaning) through paint. The painting as a veneer is then



employed not just as a simulated surface but a mechanism of transformation.



Fig.35,  
Jeff Koons,  
*FISHERMAN GOLFER*,  
from his *Luxury and Degradation* series,  
12.7 x 20.3 x 30.5 cm, 1986.

'In [my series entitled] *Luxury and Degradation* the objects are given an artificial luxury, an artificial value, which transforms them completely, changing their function, and, to a certain extent, decriticalizing them. My surface is very much a false front for an underlying degradation....'

Jeff Koons<sup>29</sup>

As opposed to other surface coverings, such as carpets, veneers are characterised by a thinness that enables them to disguise objects without overtly affecting their forms. The paradox of the veneer is a function of this thinness, as it serves to disguise itself (as well as the object) through identifying its edge with the edge of the object it obscures. Whilst being a surface, the veneer then attempts to become a volume. Mum's table did not desire to be perceived as a chipboard table with a pine surface, but as a solid pine table.

Ironically, whilst assuming many of the characteristics of the veneer, the paintings in this project desire to preserve and emphasise their nature as surfaces. Rather than attempting to merge with the volume of the object behind, the painting is content to obscure it, simultaneously preserving its role as both a cover and a picture. This cover (unlike the veneer) does not attach itself to the actual contours of the object (see *BATH* fig.37) but seeks to translate its form into a series of flat planes in order to engage it as an image.

In this way, the surface of the *Paintject* re-presents the volume of the actual object as a site for alluding to the illusionary volume of the picture.<sup>30</sup>

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## Bath

*Began the bath painting yesterday.*

*Whilst doing it I realised that it would not work as an object if the outer rim/structure of the bath appeared through the canvas.*

*I have decided to have the image be something of an actual bath - even a specific one (mum and dad's bath... my bath in Sydney).*



Fig.36,  
*MY PARENTS'*  
*BATHROOM,*  
8 Yallambee Court,  
Baulkham Hills,  
Sydney, N.S.W.

*I want to put a simple green enamel (a particular acqua green) on the top surface in high gloss. This will speak of the notion of the bath, bathroom surfaces and even a pool of water.*

*The piece will be different in that its colour, form and, maybe, the title will reveal the identity of the object behind.*

*The interesting thing for me is the way in which it dissects and rearranges aspects of the appearance and function of a bath.*

*Here 'spillage' and 'dirt' can become the aesthetic, the permanent and even the decorative.*

*The indent of a bath, which allows it to be filled with water, now contains the residues of the painting that have seeped through the canvas staining the actual bath that is now in darkness.*

*A psychological/ metaphorical Cubism... a dissection not just of visible appearances, but of functions, meanings and histories.*

*You encounter a glistening surface that floats above a curtain of stains. The colour of the surface is reminiscent of something but you are not certain of its origin. The surface stops as a fluid might with a delicate meniscus that perches on the edge from which the 'curtain' is suspended. The object is body scale and floats off the ground in an ominous way. It seems to speak of some kind of mortuary slab or tomb.<sup>31</sup>*



Fig.37,  
*BATH*,  
 Acrylic and enamel on canvas and bath, 55 x 74 x 169 cm, 1999.  
 Retitled: *Acrylic and enamel on canvas and bath*.

*Entitled BATH you become aware of why it engaged you. You knew it all along and yet it seems estranged from the baths you know (more like a form from which they might be determined or extruded). You read more - Acrylic and enamel on canvas and bath - only to realise that a bath is actually present under this 'facade' (or is it??). Buried within a sarcophagus of canvas and paint perhaps you connect with its state, in solitude and darkness, as it lies within a version of itself.<sup>32</sup>*



*BATH* represents a turning point in this project as it transferred the object not directly through its design or structure, but rather through a combination of its function and surface. What appears on the surface of this *Paintject* is not the profile of a bathtub, but the enamel colour<sup>33</sup> which mimics the surface of the actual bath and a representation if not a replication of overflow and spillage (the action of a bath being used). Here the sign and signified became merged as the dripping, flowing paint on the edge of *BATH* is in effect the spillage that it represents.<sup>34</sup>



Fig.38,  
*BATH (DETAIL)*,  
Acrylic and enamel and bath,  
55 x 74 x 169 cm, 1999.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and enamel on canvas  
and bath*.



Fig.39,  
Pat Steir,  
*WATERFALL OF THE ASIAN NIGHT*,  
Oil on canvas, 233 x 335 cm, 1990.

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## NOTES TO PAGES 19-26

### OBJECTS AND THE DOMESTIC SURFACE

#### SCREEN DOOR

1 Journal Excerpt 13/6/98

#### SOUVENIR

2 Seward, K., 'Frankenstein in Paradise,' *Parkett* 50/51, 1997, [p.71]

3 Unless it becomes a part of our collection. This is another issue in itself

4 For an in depth analysis of the souvenir see S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore The John Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp136-137

5 Paint here is then applied like make up 'The faults' and 'blemishes' of the objects are disguised through the 'cosmetic' of the image and so the cutlery tray becomes a thing of beauty, the bath tub of mystique, the bed of nostalgia When it was suggested in a critique that works such as *Screen Door* embodied 'the sublime', I replied that they were more about a facade of special effects calculated to give that impression

6 This process relates directly to the exchanges that occur with the ownership of an object.

'What defines an object, irrespective of its means of production as an individual, are the traces and imprints of particular events, that are particular to the individuals that engage with them A transformation occurs when production and presentation ends and ownership begins.. ' A McCollum, Journal excerpt, source unknown

7 In the same way in which the photograph of a thing is not the thing itself, but refers to it and in so doing becomes something else.

#### STUFFED BIRDS

8 I am of Maltese descent.

9 See also Santa Donata quote on p 1: Her 'prostrate position and stillness', combined with her state of presentation - as an object to be viewed - aroused curiosity, caring and contact Whilst not officially 'stuffed' she performs very much like the trophy birds See also the photograph ' . all photographs in a sense still life-freeze it, preserve it, as something no longer live but immortally immobile ' R Solnit, *Once Removed: Portraits by J John Priola*, 'The Color of Shadows, the Weight of Breath, the Sound of Dust', USA Arena Editions, 1998, [p 119].

#### CAST

10 Antony Gormley in an interview with EH Gombrich, J Hutchinson, *Antony Gormley*, London Phaidon Press, 1995, [p 18]

11 Jensen, W, *Gradyva: A Pompeian fancy* (1903), trans. Helen M Downey, quoted in N.Wakefield, 'Rachel Whiteread Separation Anxiety and the Art of Release', *Parkett* 42, 1994, [p 82].

12 Bois, Y A, Excerpts from 'Formless A User's Guide', in *October* 78, Fall 1996, [p 75].

- 13 Excerpt from an interview by Edward Colless , 'Undiscovered, Unmasked', *Australian Art and Collector Magazine*, April-June 1999, [p 35] Another photographic connection is the photogram 'The photogram is produced by placing objects on top of light sensitive paper The imagery created in this way is of the ghostly traces of departed objects, they look like footprints in the sand, or marks that have been left in the dust ' R. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, MIT Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985, [p 203].
- 14 Whilst the photograph requires the presence of the object to occur it has been argued that '... the photograph, [like the cast] becomes a certificate of detachment ...' N. Wakefield, 'Rachel Whiteread Separation Anxiety and the Art of Release', *Parlett* 42, 1994, [p 82] In the case of the *Paintject*, the physical and temporal netting of the object by the canvas, is not momentary but permanent and so it becomes a 'certificate of' attachment.
- 15 'In the early stages, Painting primarily invoked the concept of imitation to achieve relationships of resemblance, photography distinguishes itself . by the operation of chemical recording of the action of light, giving it the quality of the physical trace, an index It becomes . a sign which refers to the object it denotes because it really is affected by this object.' J P Antoine, 'Photography Painting and the Real, The Question of Landscape in the Painting of Gerhard Richter,' in *Gerhard Richter*, Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1995, [p 61]
- 16 By 'mobility' here I refer to the separation from the subject normally afforded by the figurative painting or photograph - whether polaroid or negative
- 17 Without this presence, the painting would lose its status as a cover and revert back to being simply a trace or rubbing The presence of the object allows the *Paintject* to sidestep allegations of just being a rubbing or frottage, whilst simultaneously evading the label of cast. Edward Colless made the observation that my ' technique is almost like (my emphasis) frottage, except that the object remains behind the subtly distended and saturated surface, physically pressing outward ' E Colless, 'Undiscovered, Unmasked', [p 35]
- 18 The painting whilst being a function of casting is actually not a cast. ' . [C]asting is [defined as being] a paradigm of any process of reduplication, of spinning out masses of copies from a single matrix or mould ' Bois, Y A & R, Krauss, *Formless. a user's guide*. New York Zone Books, 1997, [p.217]. 'The single matrix' - the object- remains fixed behind the canvas thereby transforming the 'casting' process from enabling masses of copies to producing the one 'original' trace
- 19 'The notion of casting and recasting were fundamental to Duchamp's oeuvre . [he] deals with the distinctions between "appearance" and "appartion", . The "appearance" is the actual look of a thing, its "appartion" is its pictorial analogue ' (eg a flat perspective drawing or a photograph of a solid object ) T de Duve, (ed), *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, USA MIT Press, 1991, [p 190]. '[Duchamp] uses the metaphor of a cast and its imprint to turn things inside out - to give them a kind of geometrical twist,' T de Duve, (ed), *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, [p 315]
- 20 The rejection of gesture and the articulation of various means of achieving composition was often an attempt to sidestep arbitrariness in painting. (see Stella, Johns, Rauschenberg etc ) Duchamp employs the cast to sidestep arbitrariness, not just in painting, but in art
- 21 For an interesting analysis of Bruce Nauman's casting of the space under a chair see Y.A Bois, 'Excerpts from Formless: A User's Guide', *October* 78, Fall 1996, [p 72]

- 22 Whiteread's works often function through the viewer's recognition of the object from which the trace originated, despite its absence. Whilst retaining the presence of the object behind, the *Paintject* (as articulated earlier) also requires the element of recognition in order to function. The inclusion of various domestic objects (bath, door, mattress etc.) in the *Paintject* construct, along with the nostalgic quality of some of the works, also has affinities with the work of Whiteread.
- 23 Anthony Bond on Duchamp in 'Embodying the Real', in *Body*, exh cat., 12 Sept. – Nov. 1997, Sydney: Bookman Schwartz, [p. 63]

#### CLEANING THE ARTICULATION OF SURFACE

- 24 *Cleaning* could be considered to be a Maltese national sport. My 91 year old Grandmother used to say whilst waving her little finger in the air 'Mara sabiha taghmel il-facendi' – [A beautiful woman does housework] – and in Malta all the women were 'beautiful' because they kept a clean house and thus kept up the dynamic of appearances that defined one's place in the domestic hierarchy. Note this 'direct contact' can sometimes take place at a distance, for instance when vacuuming.
- 25 Stockholder, J., 'Parallel Parking', in B. Schwabsky, *Jessica Stockholder*, 1959 – , London: Phadon Press, 1995, [p. 143]
- 26 In addition to covering, another way of preserving newness in the domestic environment was not to use the object at all. An Italian phenomenon is to sometimes have two kitchens in the house. One, usually in the basement, is used for cooking etc. whilst the other closer to the actual living quarters, is preserved as an item of display. Free from use, pristine and odour free it remains entombed within its own newness. I have heard of other scenarios where people actually live in their garages or in caravans so as not to dirty the house. See also leaving plastic on new objects after purchase so as to hold onto their newness, especially on the interior of new car doors.
- 27 White surfaces are the antithesis of the surface as disguise. In the case of the white surface it can only be clean if it actually is. My mother would always discourage me from buying white clothes as they revealed every mark and stain. Whilst the veneer and the pattern here are associated with deceit, the white surface is seen to embody honesty. For an interesting discussion on the moral dimension of pattern and decoration, see A. Forty, *Objects of Desire: a history of commodity design*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
- 28 A discussion with Richard Artschwager in K. Forster, 'Authentic Imitations of Genuine Replicas', *Parkett* 46, 1996, [p. 53]. See also the work of Richard Artschwager who investigates the space between sculpture and everyday objects through mechanisms of artificiality such as the veneer.
- 29 Jeff Koons in S. Coles, & R. Violette, (ed.) *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery and Thames and Hudson, 1992, [p. 64].
- 30 The *Paintjects* are then less three-dimensional and more a series of two-dimensional planes where each face can perform as a picture if not the edge of one.
- 31 Like the visitors to the reliquary of Santa Donata, the viewers, experience the 'charged sensation of watching [something as opposed to] someone sleep.'

BATH

32 Journal excerpt 3/1/99

33 Colour here becomes a form of found object as I attempted to find a specific colour that matched my parents' bath colour. Note that it is also a generic bathroom colour. This colour (*Sprite Green*) was selected from swatches and purchased pre-mixed from a hardware store which removed the chance aspect of colour mixing. Variations on this means of dealing with the arbitrariness of colour choice were also employed by Donald Judd 'by selecting colours from a sample book, Judd was able to explore colour in a purely empirical way, without recourse to conventionalised ordering systems, in a way which should be intelligent without being ordered' D Batchelor, *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)*, London Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, [p.45] Frank Stella: 'He frequented the cellars of the paint dealers.. buying decorator colours that had gone out of fashion.. in a way, a lot of problems were solved. You could get only certain kinds of colours and thus certain kinds of things were given – so I worked with those.' W.S. Rubin, *Frank Stella*, [p.15]; and Robert Rauschenberg '[Rauschenberg] discovered a new way to get beyond his own taste. In hardware stores.. he found that he could buy.. cans of paint whose labels had come off, so there was no way of knowing what colour he was going to use until he got them home and prised off the lid..'. C. Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors*, [p.215]

34 See also the artist Pat Steir (fig 39) whose 'poured waterfall paintings occupy both the real and the symbolic at once. They are symbolically real in the sense that these pictures represent waterfalls. Yet they are also materially or gravitationally real through the fact that the fluid here was not painted onto the canvas but actually did fly, splash and run itself down into that configuration. It is an actual record of falling water. Here, the dripping cascading paint in effect is the waterfall that it represents. The sign and the thing are compacted.' T. McEvilley, *Pat Steir*, New York. Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1993, [p. 69] For another merging of 'sign' and 'signified', see Jasper Johns' work *Flag* that will also be discussed in detail later.

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## How Does This Work Sit and What Do I Call It?

### Real Abstraction

The essential norms or conventions of painting are also the limiting conditions with which a... surface must comply in order to be experienced as a picture. Modernism has found that 'these limiting conditions' can be pushed back indefinitely before a picture stops being a picture and turns into an arbitrary object; but it has also found that the further back these limits are pushed the more explicitly they have to be observed.<sup>1\*</sup>

In the early 1960s, the act of painting came to be dominated by the critic Clement Greenberg. The boundaries of painting were articulated in relation to modernism and artists were either seen to be fulfilling the *requirements* or to be stepping outside of them. A particular *requirement* for Greenberg was a *flatness* that defined painting as something distinct from a sculpture, or an object.<sup>2</sup>

In December 1959 a painter named Frank Stella was invited to participate in one of the most prestigious shows staged at MoMA.<sup>3</sup> He presented four huge canvases painted mechanically with a regular, repetitive pattern of black stripes executed with commercial enamel on raw cotton duck with a flat 2-inch house painter's brush. Their stretchers were thicker than usual, approximately as thick as the brush's width....<sup>4</sup>

The compositions of these paintings were derived from and articulated by the edges of the canvas. The proportions of the stretchers then defined the very images they supported from behind.

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\* Footnotes for this section p.82.

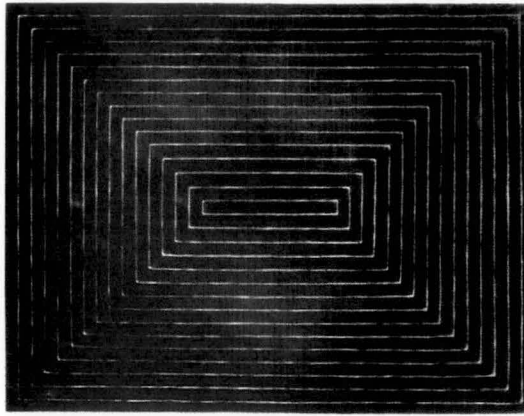


Fig.40,  
Frank Stella,  
*TOMLINSON COURT PARK*,  
Enamel on canvas, 216 x 277 cm, 1959.

Through his incorporation of the frame (limits of the painting) into the painting itself, Stella found a way to somehow retain the 'flatness' and the 'all-overness', that seemed so critical to Greenberg, whilst acknowledging the object status of the support. Stella seemed to define a zone within which both criteria could be fulfilled, drawing the whole notion of a criteria into question.

Stella's project seemed to sum up a variety of other picture/object investigations, such as the *Combines* of Robert Rauschenberg and the shaped canvases of Ellsworth Kelly. Rauschenberg's attachment of found objects to the surface of his paintings, along with the shaped canvases of Kelly, began to break down the canvas as an illusionistic window and transform it into a literal object like all others, upon which things could be placed.<sup>5</sup>



Fig.41,  
Robert Rauschenberg, *BED*,  
Combine painting,  
Oil and graphite on fabric,  
190 x 79 x 20 cm, 1955.

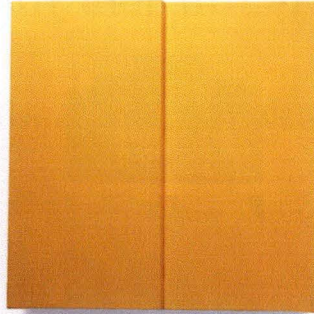


Fig.42,  
Ellsworth Kelly,  
*YELLOW RELIEF*,  
Oil on canvas, 2 joined panels,  
61 x 61 cm, 1955.

However it was the simplicity of Stella's solution that perhaps seems to locate it as a logical visible link between painting and the advent of Minimalism.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the modular and empirical nature of Stella's approach, combined with the physical presence of his pictures, seemed to push the questioning of the two dimensions of painting literally into three.

The Minimalists had come to deal with the third dimension through painting.

Many of [Donald Judd's] own works... are coloured and hang on the wall like paintings, but protrude into the third dimension like sculptures.... Judd claims for them a rather paradoxical status: although they combine qualities of both painting and sculpture, they are said to be neither... Judd seeks to secure legitimation... for an art that deliberately oversteps the limit beyond which 'a picture stops being a picture and turns into an arbitrary object,' in other words, an art that stems from and steps out of painting rather than sculpture....<sup>7</sup>



Minimalism is an important point of reference for this project in that it initiated a way of thinking about the art object in terms of systems and units that could be broken down, re-configured and thus re-defined. The Minimalists often sought also to remove the subjective approach to aesthetic decisions and turned to fabrication and/or the creation of limitations that ‘determined’ many aesthetic decisions, or removed them completely.<sup>8</sup>

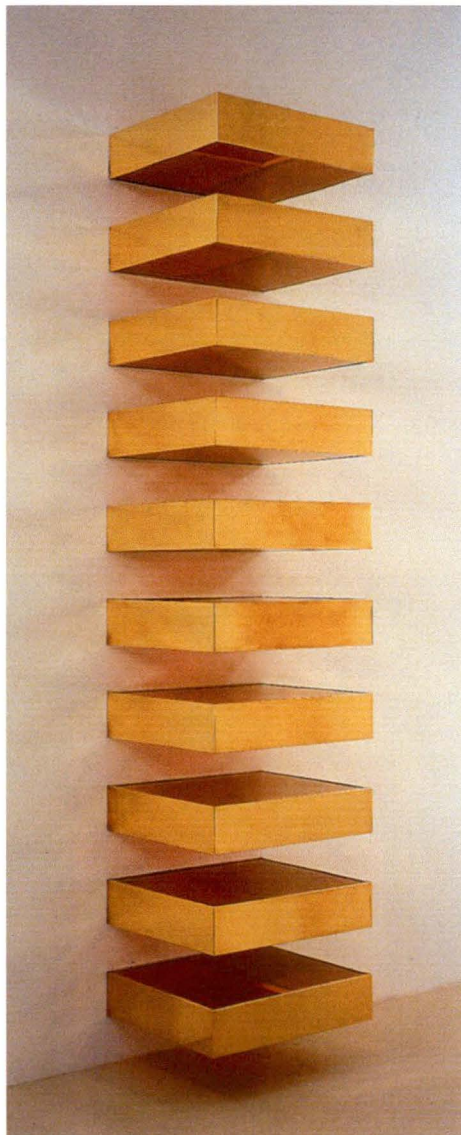


Fig.43,  
Donald Judd,  
*UNTITLED*,  
Brass and fluorescent  
plexiglass,  
304.8 x 68.6 x 61 cm, 1970

The *Paintject*'s engagement with the object/painting dilemma and the consistent use of the grid and box motifs, are also obvious minimalist traits that are presented in a manner that sometimes even looks *minimalist*. However, despite these common attributes, there are many critical differences that I will attempt to articulate.

To many of the Minimalists, the body was seen as an unwanted connection to the sculpture of the past, and the gestures of Abstract Expressionism. This rejection of the 'anthropomorphic', manifested in the reduction of parts from Minimalist works, and continued to be pursued through the inclusion of often pre-fabricated and industrial materials; as a means to eliminating the residue of the artist's hand.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, the grid and format of the *Paintject* is determined directly by the anthropomorphic dimension of the domestic object.<sup>10</sup> The formal properties of the medium of painting are engaged specifically through these dimensions, and so the 'regular/gridded arrangements' do not serve to omit 'the hand', but perform instead as frameworks upon which to include it. The 'successive abandonment' and 'purity' of Minimalism in this project, then becomes a form of 'impure' accumulation, as the minimalist box is appropriated in order to fill it.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that under the umbrella of Minimalism there exists a category, that could be similarly characterised as impure. The 'impure' Minimalists used actual objects in their work, but altered their meaning through placing them within the context of the gallery. Dan Flavin's fluorescent

tube pieces and Carl Andre's investigations with modular objects form the core of this sub group.<sup>12</sup>

Carl Andre doesn't build the Minimalist box, or have it fabricated, rather he often finds it in the form of objects such as bricks. The modular nature of his work results from a synthesis of the brick as a thing to build with, and as a visible minimalist referent (as a brick looks angled, modular, generic and so minimal) that obscures its *brickness* through context.<sup>13</sup>

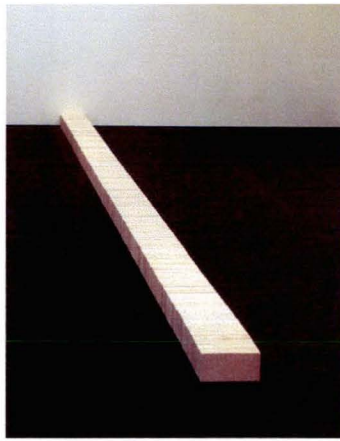


Fig.44,  
Carl Andre, *LEVER*,  
137 firebricks, Overall:  
11.4 x 22.5 x 883.9 cm, 1966.

In works such as *Lever* we see a line of bricks, that through its positioning both on the floor and in the gallery, manages to appropriate *the look* of a sculpture. However this work somehow contradicts its own overt *objectness* as it functions very much through a flatness and an emphasis on variations of colour, surface and wear, that were both antithetical to the strict minimalist code; and seen to be sourced from the category of painting.<sup>14</sup>

The *Paintject*, like Andre's work, appropriates and functions through the characteristics - such as flatness and modularity - of the original objects as a means to creating the art.<sup>15</sup> However in this project, whilst appearing to be a picture, the painting performs simultaneously as a cover, thereby engaging the *Paintject* with the language of sculpture. Paradoxically whilst serving to obscure and conceal, this cover becomes a means to revealing both the presence and domestic dimension of the object. So whilst Andre, despite presenting the actual object, attempts to play down the brick, the *Paintject*, through the act of concealing, seeks to *play it up*.<sup>16</sup>

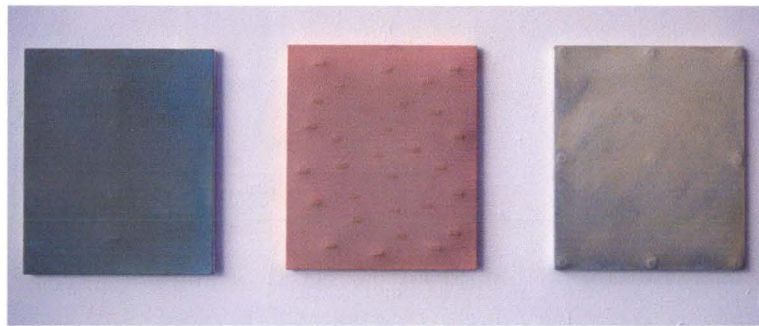


Fig.45,  
*ONE MEDICINE CABINET*,  
 Acrylic on canvas and tablets and capsules,  
 43 x 120 x 2 cm, 1999.  
 Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and tablets and capsules*  
 (*Hung in the format of a medicine cabinet*).

In his essay *Return of the Real*, Hal Foster summed up the stake of Minimalism's project as 'the nature of meaning and the status of the subject... produced in a physical interface with the actual world.'<sup>17</sup> This is echoed in the attempt of non-objective painting to negotiate its own relationship to the actual. Some contemporary practitioners, sympathetic to the picture/object concerns that gave rise to Minimalism – began to deal less with 'becoming object' and more with preserving the picture through reassessing its connection to its subject.



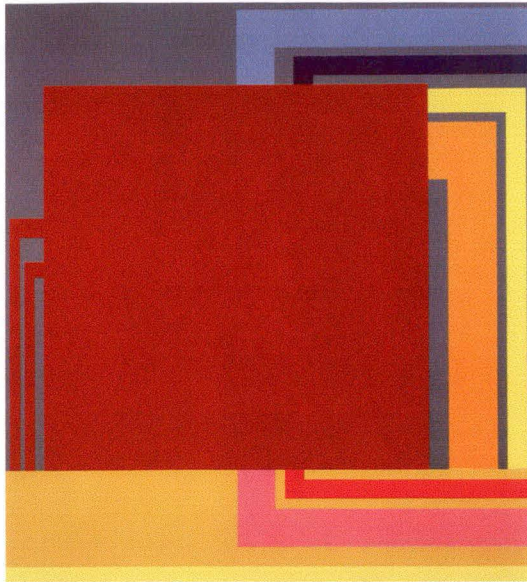


Fig.46,  
Peter Halley,  
*THE PLACE*,  
Day-Glo acrylic and Roll-a-Text on canvas,  
241 x 218 cm, 1992.

The work of Peter Halley manipulates the similarity between the appearance of various objects such as cells and conduits, and the familiar look of geometric abstraction. Whilst initially appearing to be *abstract*, his paintings reveal themselves to be representations of cells and conduits.<sup>18</sup>

Related to this approach is the early work of Gary Hume. Hume took the door, rather than the conduit/cell, as a stencil that defined his compositions. These works play on the processes initiated by Halley but they are presented in a less 'abstract' way.

Approaching abstraction as a series of stages that reduce the appearance of objects down to their basic shape and composition, allies Hume and Halley with a particular pictorial tradition.

This tradition did not involve abstraction [in an] undoing of representation; rather in the moment of high modernism, it repressed, or better sublated representation, ...[that] was preserved even as it was cancelled. Think of the residues of referentiality in the early compositions of Kandinsky or the early grids of Mondrian. Far from mistakes, these vestiges of riders and mountains in [the work of] Kandinsky or the traces of trees and piers in [the work of] Mondrian were necessary to the abstraction. They not only defined it as such but also rounded it, rescued it from the arbitrary – and the arbitrary was a constant threat to abstraction, a threat courted by Kandinsky, resisted by Mondrian.<sup>19</sup>



Fig.47,  
Wassily Kandinsky,  
*BLUE MOUNTAIN*,  
104 x 96.5 cm,  
Oil on canvas, 1908-09.



Fig.48,  
Piet Mondrian,  
*GREY TREE*,  
Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 107.5 cm, 1908.

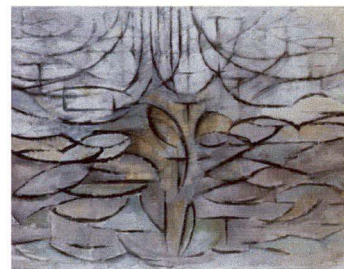


Fig.49,  
Piet Mondrian,  
*FLOWERING (APPLE TREE)*,  
Oil on canvas, 78 x 106 cm, 1908.

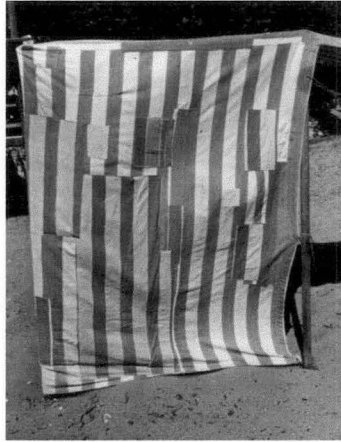


Fig.50,  
Ellsworth Kelly,  
*BEACH CABANA NO.3*,  
*MESCHERS*, Photograph, 1950.

A contemporary project that could be seen as deriving from the investigation of the relationship between abstraction and representation, is the oeuvre of Ellsworth Kelly. Kelly's elegant simplifications of slices of reality, are a means to sidestepping the issue of pictorial composition, without including the referentiality latent within early Kandinsky and Mondrian.<sup>20</sup> In an article on Kelly, 'Yve-Alain Bois comes to the conclusion that Kelly does draw... on the exact study of a specific slice of reality. But the outcome of his studies must not look like a 'genuine' composition, nor should the source be directly recognisable. Bois goes on to describe Kelly's work as the 'iconic representation of an indexical sign divorced from its referential cause.'<sup>21</sup>

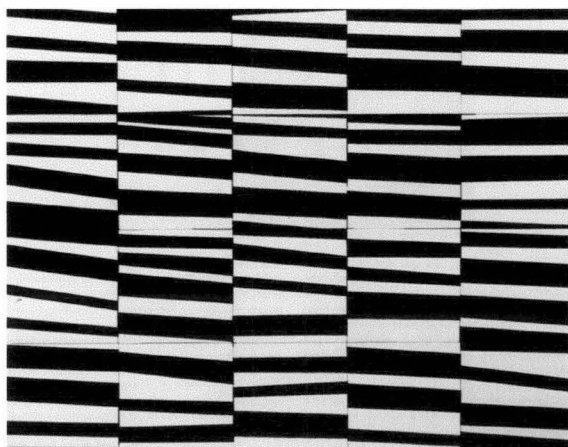


Fig.51,  
Ellsworth Kelly,  
*CITE*,  
Oil on wood,  
20 joined panels,  
143.5 x 179 cm,  
1951.

In contrast, Hume (like Halley) wants the subject (in this case the door or the cell) to present itself as a version of a traditional geometric composition. Their re-presentation of the actual scale and composition of a conduit or a door removes them from the threat of 'the arbitrary' (so embraced by Kandinsky), and whilst they assume a *Mondrianesque* look (as a means to being accepted on a surface level as 'genuine' abstractions) they in fact seek to reverse the process - the distancing from the subject - that Mondrian employed.

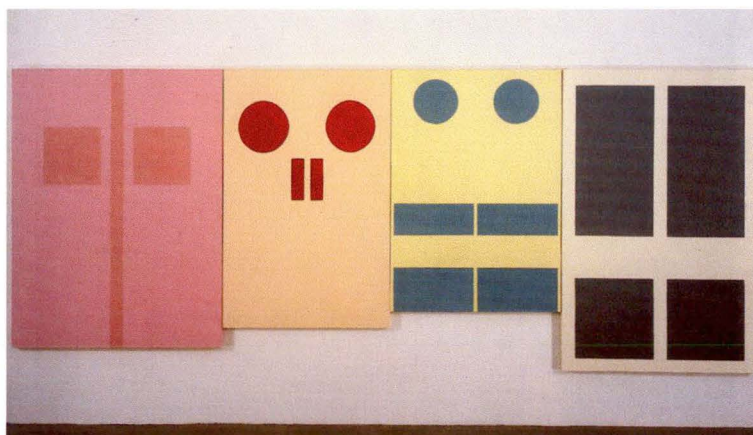


Fig.52,  
Gary Hume, *FOUR DOORS I*,  
Gloss paint on canvas, 239 x 594 cm, 1980/90.

Hume and Halley abstract the subject and come almost full circle so as to return to 'the point of recognition' that their processes seem intended to erase. Halley lies further away from this point than Hume, as his figuration is of an ambiguous scale and lies disguised - in *Day-Glo* colours - within the structure of the picture. Hume on the other hand, despite also using 'abstract colours',<sup>22</sup> gets closer to the subject. Retaining the actual door scale and composition, Hume's paintings preserve their *dooriness* thereby enabling viewers to recognise and engage with the door as the referent.



To this same end, Hume also begins to merge the *objectness* of the painting with the *objectness* of the source object (the door) through a variety of other means. His presentation of 'door height' as 'viewing height' along with his titles (that refer to doors), serves again to preserve the *dooriness*,<sup>23</sup> that begins to position his works as somehow being capable of both an illusionary (in terms of picture) and actual (in terms of door) passage. Here the aim is to create an 'iconic representation of an indexical sign...', 'in contrast to Kelly merged with as opposed to '... divorced from its referential cause.'<sup>24</sup> The subject, translated through both its appearance (its look) and form, becomes then neither a picture nor an object, but somehow an entity that is of both.

The *Paintject* (with the actual object behind it) seeks to engage with the same picture /object dialogue, however it contrasts in the means by which the painting is realised, and through which the identity of the source object is revealed.

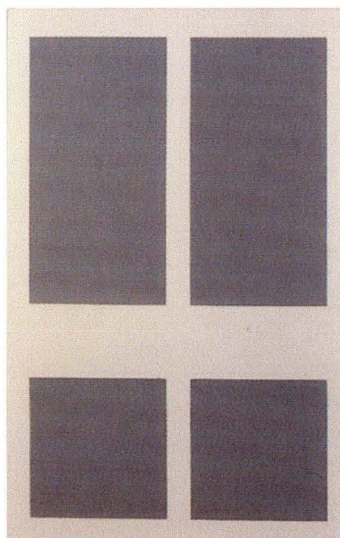


Fig.53,  
Gary Hume, *FOUR DOORS I*,  
(*DETAIL*), Gloss paint on canvas,  
239 x 594 cm, 1980/90.



Fig.54,  
*SCREEN DOOR (DETAIL)*,  
Acrylic on canvas and screen door,  
200 x 78.5 x 16 cm, 1998.  
Retitled *Acrylic on canvas and screen door*.

Where Hume's *dooriness* is something implicit and raw, the objects within this project seem to literally *seep through* to the viewer. I (like Hume) also use titles and the hanging of the works to further reveal the object (hence the position of *Bath* on the floor etc.), however the *Paintject* does not just refer to a 'door' but in addition actually contains one within its shell. The door in this context is then not simply a means to a pictorial end, as the actual object lends its physicality and actual presence to the *Paintject* construct.

The tension between the actual door and the painting, as with Hume, is articulated through the mimicry of appearance and placement, but in the case of the *Paintject*, extended through their presence in contact with each other.<sup>25</sup>

Later in the project, this 'mimicry' was taken a step further:



Fig.55,  
*WHIRLPOOL*  
(DETAIL),  
Acrylic and enamel  
on canvas and stove  
elements,  
Diameter: 16 cm,  
1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and  
enamel on canvas and  
stove elements.*

*Whirlpool* is a series of square, glossy white enamel panels, each containing a hotplate element ripped out from an electric stove, its corroded spiral form recognisable inside a razor edged circular, central spot that is soaked with acidic and encaustic colours.<sup>26</sup>

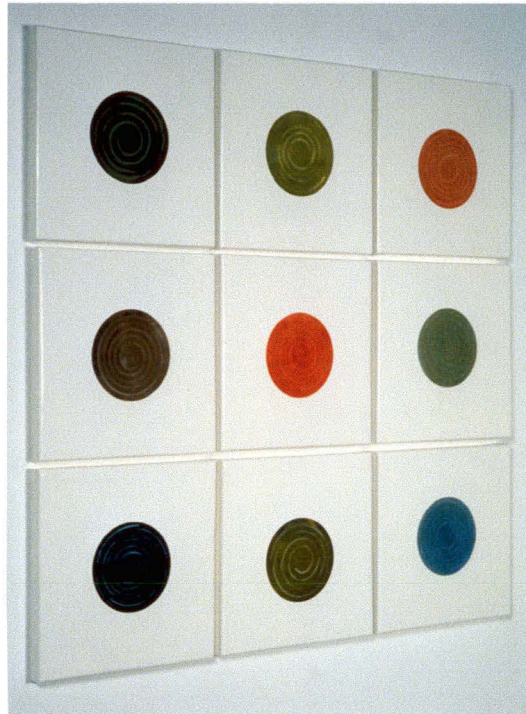


Fig.56,  
*WHIRLPOOL*,  
Acrylic and enamel on  
canvas and stove  
elements,  
140 x 140 x 4.5 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and  
enamel on canvas and  
stove elements*.

Surfaces and compositions in these works are not invented but instead extrapolated from the source object and its surrounds; and so the 'glossy white enamel' derives from the surface of whitegoods, whilst the moulded edge of the stretcher mimics the rounded form of a stove.<sup>27</sup> This is not a case of painting the domestic but rather of domesticating<sup>28</sup> the painting, as it becomes apparent that the painting is not simply attempting to represent a hotplate, but that the entire painting/object construct is attempting to become one.<sup>29</sup>



This merging of the space between the painting as art object (as paint, stretcher and canvas) and the painting as non-art object, (stove) is a function of the *Paintject* representing appearances that are not limited to and by the image.

Actual appearance is extruded and translated into the form that the canvas takes (not just the surface) and so pictorial illusions are complemented by actual allusions to the object.

So the stretcher (through being moulded), more than being just something to hold the canvas tight and square, is made to participate in the dialogue of representation and mimicry.



Fig.57,  
*STOVE IN KITCHEN.*



Fig.58,  
Vija Celmins, *HOT PLATE*,  
Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 89 cm, 1964.

The *Paintject* thus takes the whole notion of representation a step further as we are confronted with a version of a stove, rather than just an image of one, mediated through the medium not just of paint, but also the mechanisms of painting.<sup>30</sup>

## Humour

‘I like the idea of combining provocation with seduction’

Bertrand Lavier.

*After staining the entire canvas surface with fluid paint, I applied an adhesive mask over the section that I wanted to preserve, (in the case of Whirlpool, the central hotplate spiral) and proceeded to seal the surrounds with layers of enamel. In this context, (as an opaque, sealed, non-absorbent skin) the enamel becomes a cover as it mimics not only the appearance, but also the function of the surfaces to which it refers.<sup>31</sup>*

In the later stages of this project I began incorporating different types of objects such as slot-car racing tracks.<sup>32</sup> Racing tracks are model versions of action, colour and speed; but once covered and stained, they appeared as fast as a pair of old, brown socks. I began to experiment with enamel paint so as to introduce a sense of play and to contrast with the now familiar nostalgia of the stain.

Where the trace is very much a product of the object used and thereby aged, the enamel is about ‘newness’ - surfaces gleaming and fresh - resistant to the traces of time. In this sense, the enamel surfaces take the *Paintjects* further away from the actuality of the second-hand objects, as they transform them into vestiges of their newness rather than of their use.

The sparkle of the new *Paintject* led me to investigate artists who acknowledged the commodity dimension of the object as a central tenet of their respective practices.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 59,  
Haim Steinbach,  
*SUPREMELY BLACK #3*,  
Plastic laminated wood shelf; ceramic  
pitchers; card-board detergent boxes,  
74 x 168 x 33 cm, 1985.

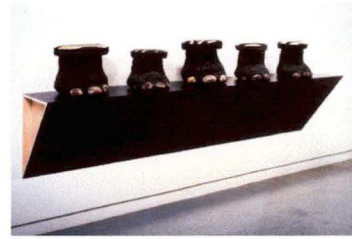


Fig. 60,  
Haim Steinbach, *UNTITLED*  
*(ELEPHANT FOOTSTOOLS)*,  
Plastic laminated wood shelf, elephant  
footstools, 83 x 71 x 41cm, 1994.

The early work of Jeff Koons and the continuing project of Haim Steinbach seem to present the object as commodity, caught in a strange space between storage and presentation, introversion and display. A version of Santa Donata is resurrected here as a vacuum cleaner placed behind perspex (in the case of Koons), or a series of washing powder boxes on a shelf (in the case of Steinbach), whose myths and legends are of the machinations of advertising, as opposed to religion.



Fig. 61,  
Jeff Koons,  
*NEW HOOVER CONVERTIBLES*,  
(New Shelton Wet/Dry Doubledecker),  
Vacuum cleaner, Plexiglass and  
fluorescent lights, 142.4 x 57.2 cm,  
1980.

The sombre found and used object, (as a familiar trope of object based work), finds a witty antidote in these post-Duchampian displays that embody provocation and seduction. The sensation of viewing Koon's vacuum cleaner through the perspex container, or Steinbach's objects on the shelf, is that of looking at a series of contemporary artefacts mediated both through their simultaneous proximity and distance. As the normally anonymous products of mass production, they assert themselves as individuals capable of the aura and immortality of the art object. They are there and real and we can see them, but they are distanced like representations of themselves.

Koons' and Steinbach's recontextualisation of the object's function and meaning, engages with the stuff of *serious art*,<sup>34</sup> grafted with a lighter side. This amalgamation of these apparent opposites excited me as it seemed to invigorate and recontextualise now tired traditions, such as the legacy of the Duchampian readymade. Later *Paintjects* are an attempt to achieve a similar hybridised state, not only via the enamel, but also through an element of the monstrous.

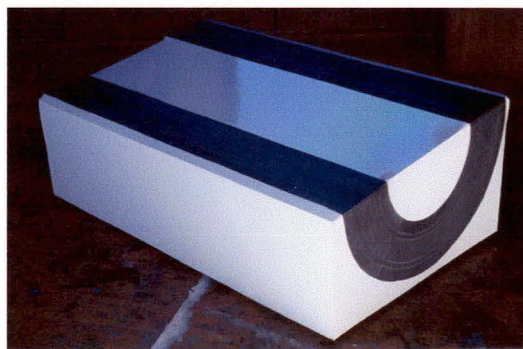


Fig.62,  
*SPEEDKING*,  
Acrylic and enamel  
on canvas and slot-  
car racing track,  
50 x 90 x 40 cm,  
1999.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and  
enamel on canvas  
and slot-car racing  
track*.

Works such as *Speedking* appear to be so strictly formal and sombre but then the other layers evolve - the title, the gloss, the wacky way in which the track wraps around the edges.



This transition is 'funny' as it seems to hold up some kind of spirituality or stoicism and then shoots it down in the flurry of its antithesis.<sup>35</sup> As a function of the viewer's familiarity with the objects, and the bizarre nature of their state of presentation, this humour is sometimes enhanced through a familiarity with the painting styles employed.



Fig.63,  
*FUN BOY THREE (DETAIL)*,  
Swimming costumes and pouffe,  
20 x 35 x 20 cm, 1999.



Fig.64,  
*SPEEDO*, Acrylic and enamel on  
canvas and swimming costumes, 25 x  
34 x 13.5 cm, 1999.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and enamel on canvas  
and swimming costumes*.

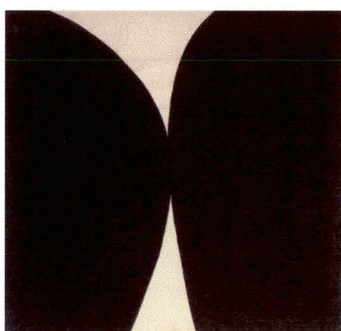


Fig.65,  
Ellsworth Kelly,  
'*STUDY FOR REBOUND*',  
Ink on paper, 44.8 x 46.7 cm, 1955.



Fig.66,  
*MARKET DISPLAY,*  
(*UNDIES FOR SALE*),  
Cordoba, Spain, 1989.

Within this context, the tropes of painting - just like the objects - become signifiers that act as mnemonic triggers of art, artists, decor, image, pattern and design. In the case of works such as *Speedo*, the viewers are confronted by things they are sometimes embarrassed to look at in public, re-presented as quasi-elegant references to Ellsworth Kelly or Donald Judd; and so having a look can also mean having a smirk.

## To be Frank

There is not an attempt on my part to create a painting language specific to me, as I deliberately employ styles that derive from familiar movements and artists. I want the works to refer to their *painting* histories and engage with them, as much as with the objects' histories, and so a gestural painting then refers to gestural paintings that precede it, tapping in on the viewer's knowledge of them. The *styles* similarly refer to types of painting such as the stripe, the monochrome and the drip.<sup>36</sup>

*The work originally entitled Frank's Fans (enamel and oil on canvas over three extractor fans) which is in appearance a deliberate reference to Frank Stella's black paintings; was intended as a homage, but also as a means to clearly articulating the Paintject's difference (independent from its look) from the means of Stella. In a classic example of life imitating art, the extractor fan units reminded me of Stella's compositions, inspiring me to quote him. Through experimenting with black enamel on canvas (a medium that Stella often used) I then set out to not just refer to, but direct the work to look like, a Stella.<sup>37</sup>*

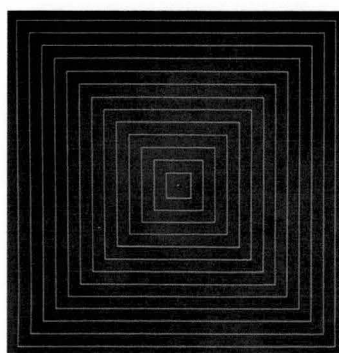


Fig.67,  
Frank Stella,  
ISLAND NO. 10,  
Alkyd on canvas.  
195 x 195 cm, 1961.

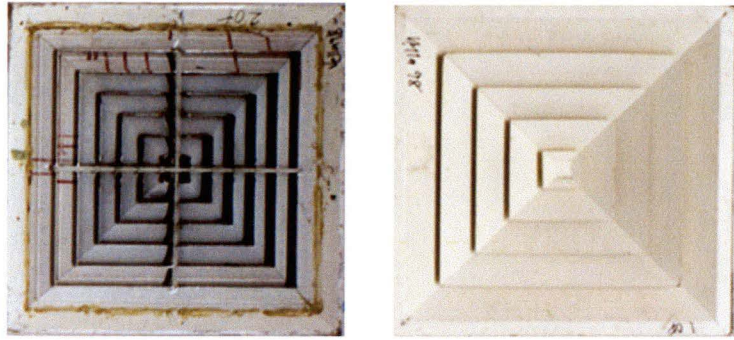


Fig.68,  
*FRANK'S FANS*, work in progress.

However only the painting look is appropriated, not the work: the lines of *Frank's Fans* are scraped back, revealing the contact with the fan behind, whilst the depth of these works – the extractor fan depth – is an exaggeration of Stella's thick stretchers. The stripes are not derived from the limits of the canvas, but are instead a reflection of what lies behind it; so here '... *what you see* [is not] *what you see*....'<sup>38</sup>

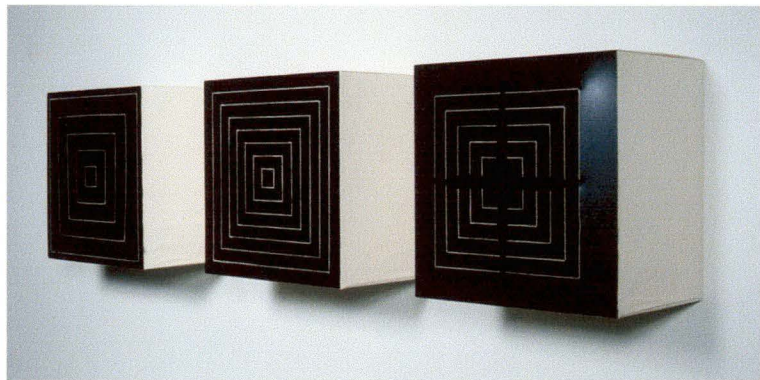


Fig.69,  
*FRANK'S FANS*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas and extractor fans,  
Each unit 60 x 60 x 41 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic and enamel on canvas and extractor fans*.

The '*Fan*' aspect of the original title is intentionally ambiguous as these works are intended as a homage and thus are *fans* of Stella, whilst the objects behind are in fact extractor fans. The pun is intended.<sup>39</sup>

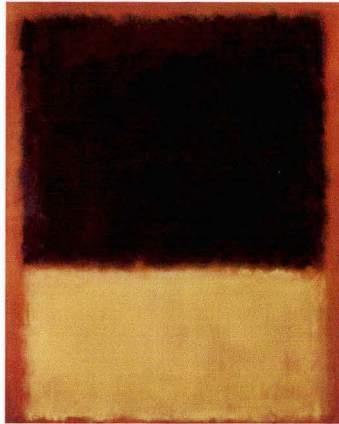


Fig.70,  
Mark Rothko,  
*NUMBER 203*,  
Oil on canvas,  
213 x 173 cm, 1954.

So in this project you get the stains of Rothko draped over some cheap venetian blinds, or the drips of Pollock replicating overcooked food - stuffs oozing over a stove. However this is not a simple act of subversion of the traditions which have given rise to my approach, but rather a struggle to find a means of making them relevant to the context of *Now*. I am in awe of the stains of Rothko, the spaces of Judd, and the drips of Pollock, but to me, here and now, they are not enough. I need to find another way of building upon their terrain, rather than of simply commenting on, or repeating, their respective approaches.

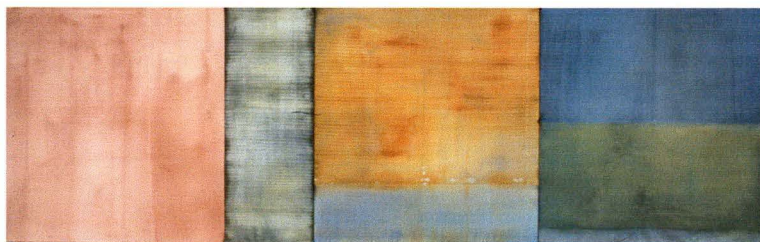


Fig.71,  
*BLIND*,  
Acrylic on canvas over four vinyl 'mini- blinds' (four parts),  
163 x 600 x 14.5 cm (overall), 1998/99.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and vinyl' mini- blinds'*.

I do not then simply address traditions in order to signify historical distance and ironic detachment. 'Irony, in its conscious referencing of something else, somewhere else, someone else is necessarily a closed system, [I am] rather, concerned to maintain the practice of painting as an open program. [Past versions of geometric abstraction are then incorporated] as an active vocabulary and syntax....'<sup>40</sup>

Painting's *uniqueness* in this project does not lie in its ability to affirm its differences to the crafted or pre-made but in its ability to redefine itself in the face of its own supposed death.

Painting within the *Paintject* context is then being moulded and formed, displaying its ability to adapt to a variety of scenarios, despite the *weight* of its past.

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## Related Art Practices:

### Jasper Johns, Bertrand Lavier and Rene Magritte



Fig.72,  
Jasper Johns, *FLAG*,  
Encaustic, oil and collage  
on fabric,  
107.3 x 154 cm, 1955.

It is certain of those paintings by Johns that we have... the absolute identification of the motif with the shape of the field.... Stella maintains a one to one relationship between the emblem and the overall shape of the canvas. His emblematicism, then, is somewhat similar to Jasper John's [sic] rendition of the American flag.<sup>41</sup>

The design and scale of *Flag* are immediately recognisable as the stars and stripes of the American flag. As a picture/image of a flag (by definition<sup>42</sup>) is itself a flag, it then '... both represents its subject and is the subject represented, [thereby placing] the conditions of "outside" and "inside", referent and sign, flag and work of art...'<sup>43</sup> in a state of flux.

The indeterminate nature of the state of *Flag* gives rise to the question: 'Is it a flag or is it a painting?' and the same question could also be put to the *Paintject* (Is it a bed or is it a painting?). However in order to arrive at this question, the *Paintject* does not manipulate the ambiguity of a definition, but the relationship between the visible and the invisible.

Under the cover the object remains present, but is re-presented as image/painting and so the viewer is made to engage with both.<sup>44</sup>

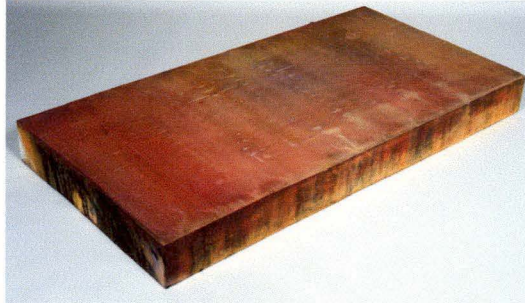


Fig.73,  
*BED*,  
Acrylic on canvas, mattress and electric blanket,  
17.5 x 93 x 186 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas, mattress and electric blanket*.

A precedent for this play with language and the visible/invisible came with the art of Rene Magritte, and in particular his work: *The Treachery of Images*. Magritte explores the terrain of ambiguity not, as in the case of Jasper Johns, of a definition (see note #42 *this section*), but of the distinction between the real and the image of it. Jasper Johns' visual question – 'Is it a flag or is it a painting?'<sup>45</sup> - returns but becomes here: 'Is it a pipe or the image (any image - not just a painting) of one?'

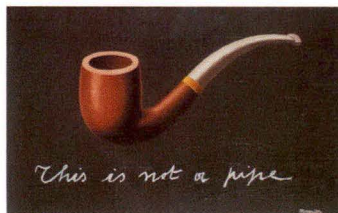


Fig.74,  
Rene Magritte,  
*LA TRAHISON DES IMAGES*  
[*THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES*],  
Oil on canvas,  
27x41 cm, 1935.

As with the respective projects of Magritte and Johns, the development of 'phenomenal oddities' could be seen to sum up



the contemporary oeuvre of Bertrand Lavier. Lavier does not paint objects in the sense that he produces images of them; he instead covers the object surface with itself in paint, so when an object is painted by Lavier, it is not a painting, but an object that appears to be made from it.<sup>46</sup>



Fig.75,  
Bertrand Lavier,  
*GABRIEL GAVEAU*,  
Acrylic paint on wood,  
metal and ivory,  
103 x 148 x 200 cm, 1981.

My particular interest in Lavier and Johns is in their manipulation of the act of presenting a reality as a representation, and the mechanisms that they employ in order to control the reception of the work.

The ways in which Johns and Lavier list their materials (what is physically present) clarifies their attitudes to the respective *realities* that they engage. Lavier's listing of the materials of a work that consists of acrylic paint on a grand piano as *Acrylic paint on wood, metal and ivory*, separates the object into its respective material realities, but refrains from naming the object itself (he didn't say acrylic paint on one grand piano).

This material description is not overtly deceitful, but leaves the option open for the wood etc., to not be the wood of an actual piano, but the wood of an object fabricated and painted to give the appearance of one. In other words, Lavier does not confirm our belief that the piano could be there.<sup>47</sup>

To a similar end, Jasper Johns lists the materials of *Flag* as *Encaustic, oil and collage on fabric*. Here the ambiguity of the term ‘fabric’ leaves the option open for the fabric to be of a real flag<sup>48</sup>; so the actual flag is not literally present; but Johns, too, does not definitely dispel the possibility.

I labour on these aspects as they articulate critical differences, for all the similarities, not just between the state of the *Paintject* and the work of Johns and Lavier, but also in how the works are received. The contrasts lie in the actuality and if not the revelation (or even assertion) that the thing is present with the viewer. Lavier’s media descriptions allow the viewer, despite seeing that a particular object is present, to contemplate the possibility that it might not be; whilst *Flag* relies on the viewer’s awareness of a flag by definition, in order for them to contemplate the possibility that *Flag* could be present in any other way.

Whilst engaging in a similar dialogue, the *Paintject* begins to articulate its differences in the act of viewing. At a distance the viewer apprehends *Flag* and a work by Lavier as being actual objects as opposed to art objects (paintings); whilst at that same distance, the *Paintject* looks like a painting (art).<sup>49</sup>

Upon moving closer a reversal takes place: *Flag* and Lavier’s works, revealing their *painterliness*, become ‘art objects’ which then oscillate with their respective realities; whilst the *Paintject* achieves this same state of ‘oscillation’ through beginning to reveal itself as comprising of an actual object.

The manoeuvring of this process, of revealing through concealing, is a critical aspect of the *Paintject's* processes of both production and reception. This 'unveiling' is mediated by and through the initial selection of the objects and their integration into the construct, and is achieved through a variety of means. Visual clues, such as the thickness of the stretchers, the protrusion of a surface from behind, or the hanging positions (that are rarely if ever simply picture height/ configurations) serve to present the possibility (note not the assertion) that the object is not just a painting.<sup>50</sup>



Fig.76,  
Bertrand Lavier,  
*STAIR UP*,  
Acrylic on metal and plastic,  
210x 150 x 50 cm, 1982.



Fig.77,  
Jasper Johns *FLAG (DETAIL)*,  
Encaustic, oil and collage on fabric,  
107.3 x 154 cm, 1955.

In isolation, these techniques hint that something other than *just a painting* is going on, but they run the risk of turning the act of viewing into a guessing game producing questions such as:

*'Is there something there?'* or *'What do you think it is?'*<sup>51</sup>

In order to remove/reduce this possibility, I decided to convey precisely what IS present through the mechanisms of the medium description and the titles.

## Titles

The development of the titles within this project has become a critical barometer of my intent. Initially the title of each piece was simply a description of the object behind the canvas – *One Screen Door*. Thus the titles would read as notations of what the viewer was in the presence of but could not actually see. This strategy was also a way of returning the viewer to the mundane reality of the object that had been transformed for them. A form of mental readymade, it was a way of making the experience of the work greater in that one realised that it was just a cutlery tray that was providing them with this art experience.

A discussion with a drunken colleague at the opening night of an exhibition brought the critical nature of my titling to my attention. With a series of covered slot-car track works I had decided to experiment and entitled them: *Touch and Go/Two slot-car racing tracks*. Looking at the work she exclaimed:

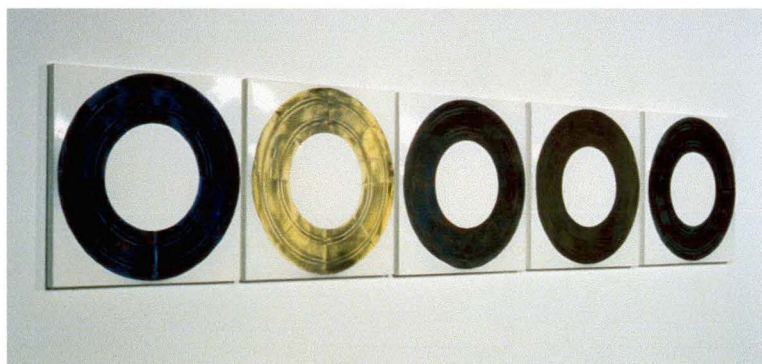


Fig.78,  
*TOUCH AND GO/FIVE SLOT-CAR RACING TRACKS*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas and slot-car tracing track,  
48.5 x 245 x 2.5 cm. 1998.

*'I didn't need to know that... (Two slot-car racing tracks)... I mean I knew they were there but I didn't need to read it....'*<sup>52</sup>

Questions developed as I began to realise that the images were becoming independent entities and more importantly, that they were referring to the objects behind in three different ways:

where it was obvious what the object behind was (fig.79);

where the painting hinted at the object through certain aspects such as colour or scale (figs.80/81); and

where you could not identify the object through looking at the painting (fig.82).<sup>53</sup>



Fig.79,  
*ONE TELEPHONE*,  
Acrylic on canvas and telephone,  
26 x 22 x 12 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas  
and telephone*.

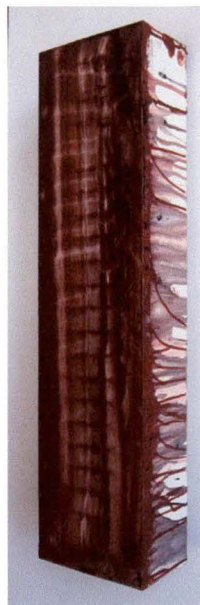
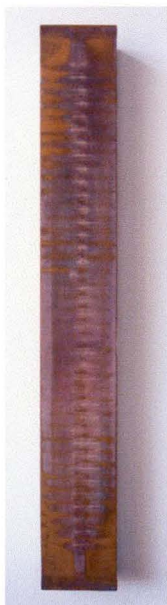


Fig.80,  
*LONG HEATER*,  
Acrylic on canvas and heater,  
103.5 x 14 x 9 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas  
and heater*.

Fig.81,  
*SHORT HEATER*,  
Acrylic on canvas and heater,  
57.5 x 14.5 x 9 cm, 1998.  
Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas  
and heater*.





Fig.82,  
*ONE LOUVRED DOOR  
 TOUCHED BY A SCREEN  
 DOOR,*  
*Oil on canvas and louvred door,*  
*33 x 25 x 10 cm, 1998.*

I decided that the titles should be sympathetic to these differences, and like the works, should play off appearance and idea, not just idea. The thing to consider was how important was it for the viewer to have their attention drawn to the object behind and did that unnecessarily repeat what they already intuitively sensed? Did having that sensation confirmed unnecessarily limit a broader experience of the work?

Subsequently the titles became more ambiguous and played off the object's reality as commodity (or as a thing to be used) that was essentially *abstract* in a very different way.

The metaphorical and allegorical implications of each thing also played a part; thus *200 Cotton Buds* became: *If Swallowed* - derived from instructions on medicine packaging, and *Touch and Go/Five Slot-Car Racing Tracks* became *Short Circuits*.



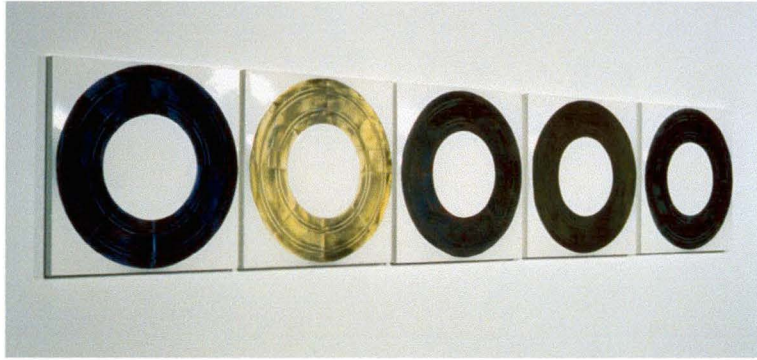


Fig.83,  
*SHORT CIRCUITS*,  
 Acrylic and enamel on canvas and slot-car tracing track,  
 48.5 x 245 x 2.5 cm, 1998.

The media description placed with the title always stated the presence of the object, and so it seemed as if I could have it all.

I have since come full circle.

As a means of engaging the viewer directly with the *invisible* actuality of what lies beyond 'the veil', the title has become the medium description. So the title *Bath* is now, *Acrylic and enamel on canvas and bath*. The title *Screen Door* has become *Acrylic on canvas and screen door*. The application of the same means of titling each *Paintject* (as simply what it is) not only makes the object's presence clear, but also engages the work more aggressively with the physical actuality of the *Paintject*. Revealing that this *Paintject* is just a bath-tub, some paint and some fabric, does not serve to dispel the intrigue or mystery, but to increase it, as the actual *Paintject's* presence is definitely another type of experience. The honest revelation of the ingredients somehow makes the recipe more magical, for YOU ARE looking at some paint, a bath-tub, and some canvas, but THERE IS more going on.<sup>54</sup>

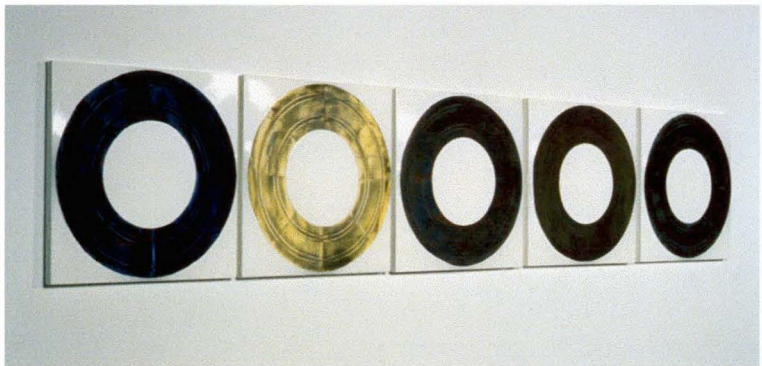


Fig.84,  
*ACRYLIC AND ENAMEL ON CANVAS AND SLOT-CAR RACING TRACK,*  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas and slot-car racing track, 48.5 x 245 x 2.5 cm, 1998.

## Belief and Touch



Fig.85,  
*SHROUD OF TURIN, (DETAIL).*

It is a large piece of linen serge, covered with stains. Lined with red silk (one side is therefore covered over), it has been carefully rolled up and placed in a silver reliquary. The reliquary itself is locked behind a metal grating within a monumental altar... in Turin. None of the sheet... itself, therefore, is visible. One kneels before a photographic negative, as it were, enshrined in the altar and illuminated from within.

Sometimes - though very rarely - it is carried in a procession.... But even then nothing can be seen. All the faithful express the same dissatisfaction: '... I was dissappointed: *non si vede niente* (you can't see anything) everyone was saying....' But the dissatisfaction and the attempt to see constitute *something*. In fact, *almost* nothing was visible.

'We tried to see something else,' the spectator goes on to say, 'and little by little we could see....'<sup>55</sup>

The *Paintject* title, as an affirmation of the *invisible* object being there, places the viewer in the state of having to contemplate whether or not to believe this fact. The tension of the *Paintject* is formed through the inability of the viewer to determine the true state of the object they confront which often places them in a situation where they succumb to touching the surface.<sup>56</sup>



Fig.86,  
Andrea Mantegna,  
*CHRIST DEAD MOURNED BY THE  
VIRGIN AND SAINT JOHN, (DETAIL),*  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 75 cm, 1490-1500.

Like the skeptical visitors to the body of Santa Donata, viewers of the *Paintject* are not satisfied with just looking; often they discreetly touch the paintings, or ask permission to *poke* the work. Like Thomas, they need to slide their hands into the wounds before they believe. They know something is there but need to have it confirmed, and so until they *touch*, are suspended in a moment of uncertainty.

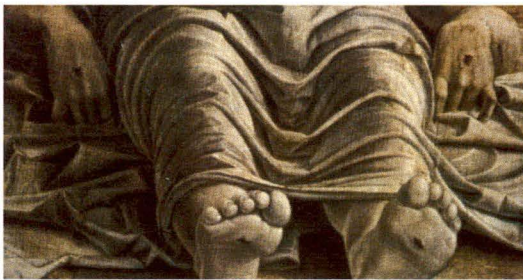


Fig.87,  
Andrea Mantegna,  
*CHRIST DEAD MOURNED BY THE VIRGIN  
AND SAINT JOHN (DETAIL),*  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 75 cm, 1490-1500.



I heed the requests of those that ask, and observe their reactions as they run their fingers over the paintings. The irony is fantastic as the request: 'Can I touch it?' is normally reserved for the sacred, the special and/or the sexual. In this instance we have something as mundane as a coat hanger or a cutlery tray (something the viewer probably touches every day) that takes on a special significance. As viewers, they are confronted by the invisible presence of a thing, and yet they would never question the contents of their corn flakes box before they opened it. <sup>57</sup>



Fig.88,  
Andrea Mantegna,  
*CHRIST DEAD MOURNED BY THE VIRGIN  
AND SAINT JOHN*,  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 75 cm, 1490-1500.

*The objects behind my paintings are in contact with the canvas that covers them. Once behind this shroud, they become invisible and only directly touchable from behind the painting. Unable to see the object as I work on the surface, I too am forced to touch it in order to make it visible.*<sup>58</sup>

*Touch* is a feature of the *Paintject*, right through from the moment that I select and grasp the objects at the point of purchase, to the point of *viewing*. The space bridging these nodes is the process of painting that in this project encompasses a tactile connection between myself and the object, but also from object to image. I would concur here with Merleau-Ponty's premise that one cannot touch another object without being touched by it,<sup>59</sup> as touching the object in the act of painting, brings me physically as well as emotionally closer. The nature of this connection defines the feel of the painting/image and in fact replaces the visual contact (which implies a distance) with the subject within traditional, representational modes of painting.<sup>60</sup> Marks here appear and disappear as a result of the duration and type of contact that occurs, and become evocative of marks that can be seen to take place seemingly on their own around the home - such as the dust under the door mat, the heat mark from the cup of tea left on the stereo or the mould on the shower curtain.

The paintings within this project often replicate the appearance of these *undesirable* domestic marks and in some cases are also seen to occur by themselves. Here, removed and re-positioned, the stain is made to be contemplated rather than erased.<sup>61</sup>





Fig.89,  
*200 COTTON BUDS*,  
 Acrylic on canvas and cotton buds,  
 45.5 x 183.4 x 4.5 cm, 1998.  
 Retitled: *Acrylic on canvas and cotton buds*.

As I watched, a painting originally entitled *200 cotton buds* changed on its own. It was more than the usual change in colour. In the process of drying, the cotton buds were absorbing the pigment through the surface of the canvas, creating highlights on the surface. This process responded to the materials through the prevailing climactic conditions, turning *the end* of a painting into a process of nervous watching, as the thing transformed before my eyes.<sup>62</sup>

The oeuvre of the German artist Gotthard Graubner forms a fascinating precedent for a similar form of exchange through the canvas surface.

Graubner's early 'colour-space-body' works involved the artist 'fabricating objects with taffeta or raw cotton stretched over foam (my emphasis). In the course of the layered painting process the mass of colour found its way into the foam and saturated it... taking root in the volume.<sup>63</sup>

Graubner's unification of the space behind the picture with the surface (by filling it) led to a blurring of the distinction between surface, body and dimension.

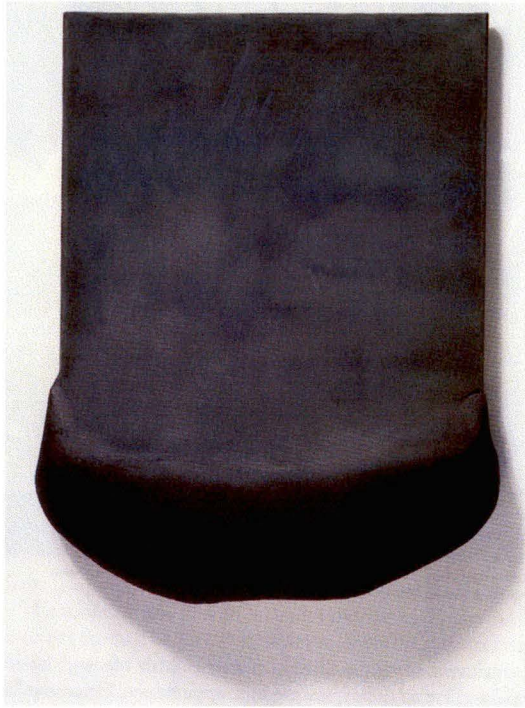


Fig. 90,  
Gotthard Graubner, *UNTITLED*,  
Fibre filled pillow with painted nylon  
stretched over it, wood, 96.5 x 76 x 15 cm, 1969.

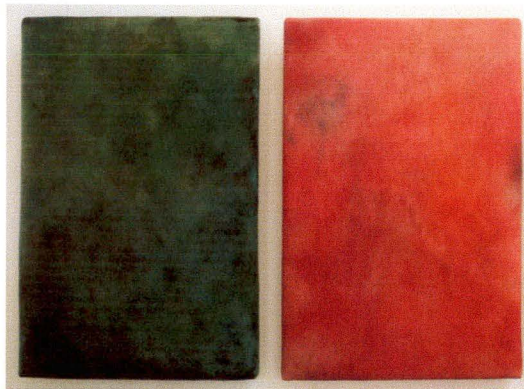


Fig. 91,  
Gotthard Graubner,  
*UNTITLED*,  
Mixed media on canvas,  
Each 127 x 198 cm, 1978.

Graubner placed actual cushions behind his early paintings and later incorporated just foam - thus moving from an actual object into the material from which it was made.<sup>64</sup> Where Graubner now utilises the synthetic padding normally used for stuffing upholstered furniture, I would use the furniture itself. Where the *Paintject* functions through a revealing of what it conceals, the 'colour-space-body' works of Graubner, connect through concealing what reveals them.<sup>65</sup>

HOW DOES THIS WORK SIT AND WHAT DO I CALL IT?

REAL ABSTRACTION

- 1 de Duve, T , 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas' essay in,  
*Reconstructing Modernism*, [p 244]
- 2 See also the artist Robert Ryman's negotiation of Greenberg's categories ' . It's as if when  
speaking of Ryman, modernist categories were grafted onto the pictorial components that  
Greenberg himself had avoided "Essence" would no longer reside in the ever greater  
coincidence between a delimited two-dimensional support and its painted surface, but in the  
specific qualities of texture, brushstroke, affixing elements, stretcher bars, etc , everything  
constitutive of the painting itself ' . J Clay, *La Peinture en charpie*, in 'Dossier Ryman',  
*Macula*, no 3/4 November 1978, [p 183] Quoted in Y.A. Blois, *Painting as Model* Cambridge,  
Mass MIT Press, 1990, [p 224]
- 3 This exhibition was entitled, *Sixteen Americans* and curated by Dorothy Miller  
The exhibition included Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly and Jasper Johns
- 4 de Duve, T , 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,' essay in  
*Reconstructing Modernism*, [p.244].
- 5 'By the mid-1950s Robert Rauschenberg had begun to title his large collage-driven canvases  
"Combines". Rauschenberg ' . had begun to attach "found" objects or everyday materials to  
the surface of [his] canvas For the critic Leo Steinberg, Rauschenberg's work. marked a  
highly significant turn in the development of painting This was a turn away from the idea of a  
painting as an illusion of space behind the literal plane of the canvas, and toward the "flatbed  
picture plane" in which the canvas becomes a surface more like a tabletop or a pin-board  
For Steinberg, this surface was marked by opacity rather than transparency, literalness rather  
than illusion It was a logical effect of this re-orientation of the picture-plane that the  
distinctions between painting and sculpture began to break down In abandoning the illusion of  
three dimensions, painting took to those dimensions literally And became something else in the  
process ' D Batchelor, *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)*, London Tate Gallery  
Publishing, 1997, [p 15]
- 6 'By the mid 1960's the picture plane was something to which Donald Judd was eager to say  
good riddance, declaring the canvas field as nothing more than one side of a "specific object."  
That experience of the impenetrability the literalness, of the two dimensional surface had been  
made possible largely by Rauschenberg's work itself.' R Krauss, 'Perpetual Inventory' in  
*Robert Rauschenberg a Retrospective*, Cambridge, Mass MIT Press, 1990 New York:  
Guggenheim Publications, 1997, [p 207] Whilst the monochrome allied the shape of the canvas  
with the shape of the picture/image, it was seen to reject divisions within the picture plane
- 7 de Duve, T., 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,' essay in  
S Guilbaut, (ed ) *Reconstructing Modernism*, [p. 267]

- 8 The *Paintject* presents itself as a contradictory form of object. Whilst alluding to the perfection of prefabrication, surfaces of the *Paintject* (particularly in the case of the enamel paint) reveal the imperfections (such as brush marks and scratches) of their own making (see also note #17 in *Enter the Paintject*). In this sense the *Paintject* could be seen to articulate that clichéd space between, not just an object and a painting, but bridging movements (such as Abstract Expressionism) that championed the hand and those, (such as Minimalism) that sought to reject it. The positioning of this project in a grey area, such as the space between, identifies it with the antithesis of the Greenbergian attempt to address and identify disciplines through a certain purity/specificity.
- 9 Some Minimalist objects did end up referring both directly and indirectly to the body - see Robert Morris - but in most cases it was either played down or entered the work indirectly.
- 10 The objects that surround us are related to our own scale. The size of a button, the width of a handle, or the height of a door, are combinations of their function merged with the part of our body needed to initiate, or control that function. So the object, no matter how inanimate, already exists as a prosthetic extension of ourselves. To grasp an object is then a two-way exchange as our motion is moulded by the thing that we have moulded through our motion. These associations are often exaggerated through my selection of objects that are overtly made for bodies, such as the bath tub.
- 11 'Like many artists since the 1960s (from Anish Kapoor to Jeff Koons), and like a great many of his own generation (such as Rachel Whiteread), [Damen] Hirst takes the format of the Minimalist open box, or shallow tray, or modular cube and inserts a kind of human or at least bodily content into it. Minimalist form serves these artists as a frame or grammar through which contemporary subjects may be articulated as art. Hirst comes up with a striking balancing act: the readymade or found object is provided with a frame of reference, while the "empty" Minimalist box is simultaneously supplied with a content.' D. Batchelor, *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, [p. 75].  
See also Haim Steinbach: Steinbach's shelves '... have the effect of assigning minimalist sculpture to the display unit.' J. Miller, *Haim Steinbach Recent works: from Dec 9, 1988 to Feb 26, 1989*, CAPC. Musée d'art contemporain Bordeaux, Capc: Musée d'art contemporain, 1988, [p. 158].
- 12 'Andre had known Frank Stella since 1952 and had been impressed with the way he made his paintings by combining identical, discreet units.' D. Batchelor, *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, [p. 27].
- 13 Andre's use of the brick plays off the contextual exchange of Duchamp's *Readymade*, however in contrast to Duchamp, he seeks to present more than just the brick as a readymade. Andre attempts to use the brick (in a physical sense) to make art. This distinction blurs when one considers that like the Readymades of Duchamp, a piece by Andre, such as *Lever*, would just look like a line of bricks outside of the gallery.
- 14 Andre's work could obliquely be seen to invert Stella's translation of painting into object/sculpture.
- 15 The slot car tracks of *Short Circuits* (fig. 83) dictated particular compositions based on their modular nature. The scale of *Blind* (fig. 71) results from a desire to mimic/replicate the zone of

- the window along with its depth. See also the modularity of my early objects – cutlery trays/ bread crates- manifesting as stacks and works in series (figs 15/16)
- 16 ‘We have ideas about bricks A brick just isn’t a physical mass of a certain dimension that one builds houses with The whole world of associations, all the information that we have - the fact that it is made out of dirt, that it’s been through a kiln, romantic ideas about brick cottages, or the chimney . or labour . ’ Rauschenberg in conversation with David Sylvester Interview with Rauschenberg, BBC, August 1964, quoted in R Krauss, ‘Perpetual Inventory’, essay in *Robert Rauschenberg a Retrospective*, W Hopps, & S Davidson, New York Solomon Guggenheim Publications, 1998, [p 219] In his work Andre focuses on the formal aspects of the brick rather than the narrative of the brick as a found object (as described by Rauschenberg) The *Paintject* ‘plays up’ the object through revealing certain (but not all) aspects of it as a means to triggering various narratives
- 17 ‘ the stake of Minimalism is the nature of meaning and the status of the subject produced in a physical interface with the actual world Minimalism thus contradicts the two dominant models of the abstract expressionist, the artist as existential creator (advanced by Harold Rosenberg) and the artist as formal critic (advanced by Greenberg) In so doing it also challenges the two central positions in modern aesthetics that these two models of the artist represent, the first expressionist, the second formalist.’ H Foster, *The Return of the Real. the avant-garde at the end of the century*, Cambridge, Mass MIT Press, 1996, [p 40]
- 18 Such cells and conduits are for Halley, motifs of both Modernist design and symbolic of the social and linguistic prison that is western Culture that derives heavily from the writings of Foucault and Baudrillard Felix Ratcliff in conversation, December 1999  
See also the work of Australian artists Robert Rooney and Dale Hickey who in a similar way to Halley, used domestic/figurative motifs to corrupt the principles of colour field/geometric abstraction See Chris McAuliffe’s, *Art and Suburbia*, Roseville [NSW] Craftsman House, 1996, [p 81]
- 19 Foster, H , *The Return of the Real*, [p 103]  
See also my references to ‘the problems of painting’ in the introduction
- 20 Kelly’s shaped canvases become monochromes of sorts and as such paradoxically begin to blur the boundary between a picture and an object. Kelly’s early translations of shapes not as images, but as objects that can be perceived as such, also connects with the projects of Jasper Johns and Frank Stella who seek to identify the subject with the shape of the support
- 21 Bois , Y.A , from ‘Kelly’s Trouvailles Findings in France’ in ‘Ellsworth Kelly The Early Drawings, 1948-55’, quoted in S Maurer, ‘Forever in the Present’, *Parkett* 56, 1999, [p 60].
- 22 By ‘abstract colours’ here I mean colours that are not the typical colours of doors.
- 23 Note that Halley’s stretchers are very thick They emphasize their objectness but not the particular objectness of a cell or conduit.
- 24 Bois , Y.A , from ‘Kelly’s Trouvailles Findings in France’ in ‘Ellsworth Kelly The Early Drawings’, 1948-55, quoted in S Maurer, ‘Forever in the Present’, *Parkett* 99, [p 60]
- 25 Note that the extension of ‘this tension’ is not meant to imply that my work is better than Gary Hume’s

- 26 Colless, E, 'Undiscovered/Unmasked,' Australian Art and Collector Magazine, April-June 1999, [p 35]
- 27 See also the work of Jasper Johns where surfaces are often appropriated rather than invented  
In addition the original title, *Whirlpool*, was derived from the brand name of a well-known manufacturer of white goods This includes the commodity aspect of the objects in question  
In addition *Whirlpool* described the spiral of the stove elements and set up another level of representation, in that the spiral became a representation of an actual whirlpool  
Note that points (such as these) referring to my titles are only relevant prior to the retitling of the works in the later stages of this project
- 28 I do not use the word 'domesticating' in its traditional sense here 'Domesticating' refers to an allying with the domestic rather than a taming or softening of character.
- 29 In this context, the *Paintject* assumes something of the hyperreal: 'Hyper-reality is one consequence of the modern tendency for signifiers to exceed their referent, by pushing the conventions of realism to a point where the relations of motivation between the referent and the signifier are reversed In this view, any figure of the hyperreal, [such as a cyborg] is a super-reversed/resolved signifier that, is marked by an ambition to replace or reincarnate the thing it represents ' C Lury, *Prosthetic Culture - Photography, Memory and Identity*, London Routledge, 1998, [p 86]
- 30 'Modernist theory presupposes that mimesis, the adequation of image to referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent Postmodernism (see also the *Paintject*) neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works to problematise the activity of reference ' C Owen, 'The Allegorical Impulse toward a Theory of postmodernism ', *October* 12 & 13 (Spring & Summer 1980), [p 235]. Quoted in H Foster, *Return of the Real*, [p 88]

#### HUMOUR

- 31 'These surfaces' are covers designed to obscure the mechanics of an object or to render it more sensual/hygienic (like stove bodies) Paint here performs as packaging, as it obscures the object behind along with the initial processes of revealing it. See also Jessica Stockholder's description of enamel: 'The enamel paint draws attention to surface - to skins over objects and skins of objects The surface is simultaneously rested on and poked into It is treated as a flat weightless, almost abstract or not physical area, at the same time it is an extension of an object and is treated as such The (enamel) paint functions both to alter existing surfaces and as a very flat object in its own right placed over or along side other objects ' J Stockholder in 'Parallel Parking - Artist's Writings 1992,' in *Jessica Stockholder*, Phaidon, 1995, [p 143]
- 32 As a toy, this object was associated more with fun than with the mundane rituals of living (sleeping, washing etc ) and I became interested in somehow acknowledging this aspect of the object.
- 33 The obvious historical reference point is the Pop movement. Oldenburg, Warhol and others



- 34 Many of the so called *serious* formal and conceptual premises of movements such as Minimalism and geometric abstraction (such as seriality, the grid and the module etc ) are present within the work of Koons and Steinbach but grafted with a lighter side There is again a Pop mentality here
- 35 The popular perception was that Minimalism was a movement grounded in stoicism and seriousness The Minimalists were not known for their ability to laugh either at themselves or their work The humorous cartoons and writings of Ad Reinhardt could be seen as a notable exception
- Upon hearing me read out a section of this paper, a professor characterised my project as ‘Telling Minimalism to get a life!’

TO BE FRANK

- 36 This is a strategy with precedence See the works of Sigmar Polke, Bernard Frieze, Gerhard Richter, Imants Tillers, etc
- The critic Thomas Lawson, ‘argued that the critique of painting could only be continued *within* painting, as if deconstructively, with painting used as camouflage for its own subversion ’
- Lawson , T , ‘Last Exit Painting,’ *Art Forum*, October 1981, Quoted in H. Foster, *Return of the Real*, [p 101]
- 37 Journal entry Note that I actually used canvas (not the thermal lining curtain fabric) in this work to achieve a *Stella look*
- 38 ‘The strength of conviction conveyed by some of the great American artists of the past few decades rests on the deduction – free reality of the painting, its total visibility. Frank Stella’s “what you see is what you see” bears witness to a faith in form and in communicative clarity.’
- Franz, E , on Sherrie Levine, ‘Presence Withdrawn,’ *Parkett* 32, 1992, [p 95]
- ‘I always get into arguments with people who want to retain the “old values” in painting – the “humanistic” values that they always find on the canvas If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there ’ From an interview by Bruce Glaser with Frank Stella and Donald Judd broadcast by WBAI-FM, New York, February 1964, under the title ‘New Nihilism or New Art?’; published as ‘Questions to Stella and Judd,’ ed By Lucy R Lippard, *Art News*, New York, Sept 1966, pp 55-61, quoted in W. Rubin, *Frank Stella*, [p.41]
- The assertion that there is nothing present beyond the visible materiality of the work is the antithesis of the *Pantject* mechanism.
- 39 This form of appropriation lies in contrast to the project of Sherrie Levine, as her copying of works seeks to question authorship, the original and meaning However, like Levine my ‘personal style’ is in the mechanism not the appearance of it, meaning that some of my works do not look *original*, but like the work of Levine, need other triggers so as to enable the viewers to see their originality (beyond their appearance) *Franks Fans* was an attempt to communicate this point Note again that the points that refer to my titles are only relevant prior to the retitling of the works in the later stages of this project.
- 40 David Hansen, *WARP* exhibition essay, CAST gallery, Hobart, 1999

- 87

is presented (pigments on woven fabric) – the fictive reality of what the picture purports to show, and the actual reality of what it is. In early 1912 Picasso made a small painting, *Still Life with Chair Caning* (fig 34). But perhaps “painting” is no longer an accurate word, because a considerable part of the picture was not painted, but rather glued on – namely the piece of chair caning, which was actually printed oilcloth, filling the bottom half of the picture. The function of this fake caning is paradoxical: on the one hand, it is a slice of pure realism – on the other, it destroys any last vestige of pictorial illusionism – any sense that we are looking through an imaginary window at a scene from the real world. We are looking at both an illusion and the “real” thing. T. Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1998, [p 24].

- 48 Even if the material was specifically identified as ‘canvas’ as opposed to ‘fabric’ this ambiguity would remain.
- 49 *Flag* affords complete visibility so as to enable recognition ‘without deliberation’ and so you see *Flag* and you think flag. In contrast it takes time to feel familiar with the *Paintject* as you see shiny, green surface but you do not immediately think bath. This contrast in the time it takes for the work to become apparent and the means to achieving the invisibility that enables it makes the *Paintject* a very different beast. See also previous discussion of *Paintject* in relation to the work of Gary Hume and Peter Halley.
- 50 See also the thick stretchers of Stella and Halley and also the hanging positions of Hume that function to a similar end.
- 51 Whilst I do not have any specific problems with ‘guessing games,’ I do not want the covering of the object to simply end up being about a *now you see it now you don’t* mentality. I want the *Paintject* to be more about *how you see it*.

#### TITLES

- 52 In conversation at Cast Members Show, CAST Gallery Hobart, December 1998.
- 53 These categories are metaphorically aligned with various storage states. The canvas and stretcher perform like any mechanism of display such as a cupboard or a plinth. Like a cupboard with glass doors (open or closed), a cupboard with open doors allows you to engage with the contents as well as the cupboard itself. In the case of a cupboard with closed opaque doors, one can only imagine the contents.
- 54 An entity that is more than the sum of its physical parts is to me what art is, and the *Paintject* is somehow about packaging and presenting that magic.

#### BELIEF

- 55 ‘The Index of the Absent Wound. Monograph on a Stain.’ G. Didi-Huberman, (trans.) T. Repensek, *October* 29, Summer 1984, [p 63].
- 56 Viewers here don’t just want to look (or watch) they want to touch. Complete verification not just involves a look but often a touch. To identify a body, the cover must be pulled back to see the face of the deceased. The entire mechanism of surprise or of the wrapping of gifts is based

upon not knowing what might happen or what is inside. It is often the proximity to the contents and in contrast, the distance between their verification (due to the invisibility of the contents) that is the source of the magic of the wrapped gift. Wrapping enables us to imagine what might be inside. More often than not, people attempt to guess what a package contains before opening it. They read the clues of the package, shake it, feel its weight etc. The articulation of the package serves to heighten the surprise: a beautifully wrapped gift can heighten the anticipation and, sometimes, the disappointment.

Note that touching a work by Lavie, Johns or Magritte will not serve to confirm or deny the true state of the art. Touching the *Paintject* confirms that there is an object present behind the canvas as you can feel it.

- 57 Often the label (*This package contains: One carton of...*) involves a revelation of the invisible. We realise what is behind the cover when it has been named. This means of identification seeks not only to articulate what is there but also what state it is in and even seeks to dictate how the thing should be contacted and touched (*Handle with care* etc.).
- In the case of the supermarket, the cover as package or seal, not only provides a surface for advertising (which is an illusion capitalising on the invisible actual appearance of the contents) but simultaneously assures us that what lies behind the facade is fresh or bacteria free.
- We tend to believe what we read on the containers and packages of things.
- Labelling such as lists of ingredients or the *USE BY* date are often not questioned.
- The fatal flaw in the label is that it has to be placed on the object at a specific point in time and hence a place. With the movement of the package comes the increased risk that what is said to be inside has in fact been altered. Having spent a period working for a courier company loading trucks I can attest to the fact that having *FRAGILE* on a container does not necessitate a delicacy of handling. And so when we open the carton of eggs it is not to see how many are there but to see if they have been damaged.

Being subject to the conventions of viewing an artwork, we cannot shake the *Paintject* but must see (and reveal) it with our eyes and minds. The bath and the stove elements merge with the reality of what these things mean to the viewers, translating the object into a screen for the projection of an experience. This screen is a surface already tinted with the viewers' memories etc. and so viewing becomes an act of looking not from one to the other but rather through.

- 58 Journal excerpt 13/6/99. It is worth noting that the suede thermal lining fabric used is actually designed to block out light. There are again, photographic links here.

- 59 See M. Merleau-Ponty, 'The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology', *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1992, [pp.90-97].

- 60 I like the idea of getting too close also implying paradoxically a distance.
- When we get too close the eye, as the camera, is unable to focus, and so a physical proximity implies an ocular distancing.

- 61 Underlying this is a desire to somehow upset the logic of what can be considered as being beautiful. I often find the residues of the processes of living to be more beautiful and moving than the things presented for display that are intended to beautify the home. This is another manifestation of the desire I described in the Introduction (see note #16 in *Enter the Paintject*).

- 62 So began a fascination with an object making an image of itself and a quest for other absorbent  
objects (pillows, mattresses and cigarettes) to include in the space behind my canvases
- 63 Schutz, S., 'Color- Space Bodies The Art of Gotthard Graubner' *Arts Magazine*,  
April-Summer 1991, [p 51]
- 64 In this case the object behind is used more as a means to an optical effect, than as a mechanism of  
sign or mnemonic value
- 65 By 'concealing what reveals them' I refer to the way in which Graubner has moved toward  
concealing the presence of the materials behind his works from the viewer Whilst Graubner's  
early material descriptions describe his materials in detail (*Fibre – filled pillow with painted  
nylon stretched over it*), later works are accompanied by descriptions that omit the presence of  
the foam behind (*Oil on canvas*)
-

## Conclusion:

### The End as a Beginning

The placement of the object behind the canvas evolved from an attempt to find a way of arriving at a painting that somehow side-stepped a primarily subjective, aesthetic approach.

However these same objects have taken the project beyond the premise that motivated their inclusion. Whilst affecting the processes of object/picture translation, placing the objects behind has also simultaneously transformed the roles of the painting construct.

The traditional pictorial space of the painting is translated here through the actual space (behind the image) where the object is placed. The painting as a surface 'like a table top or a pin-board'<sup>1</sup> \* is with the *Paintject* taken a step further to become a cupboard or a wardrobe; an object not just to place things on, but also in. In this context, painting transcends its traditional role of mediating the third dimension (through vision) into illusionary space and becomes additionally *a site of storage*.

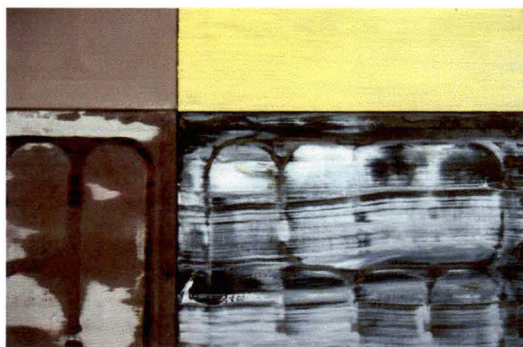


Fig.92,  
*ACRYLIC ON CANVAS  
AND CUTLERY TRAYS  
(DETAIL)*,  
Acrylic on canvas and  
cutlery trays,  
34 x 33.5 x 42 cm, 1997.

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\* Footnotes to this section p.98.



The mechanism of the *Paintject* began as a means towards achieving an abstract end but served instead to place the object behind into a context of abstraction. Here the familiar object, embalmed within an abstraction of itself, emerges as both a representation and a re-presentation. The proximity of this discrepancy, between the image and the illusion that it represents, placed in contact with the real, creates the tension that is the *Paintject*.

As a function of this morphing of subject, picture and object, the *Paintject* then engages surface as both a cover and a zone through which the temporal, physical and contextual realities of the object behind are mediated into image/painting.

The *Paintject* (as a function of the act of concealing) then becomes more about a process of revealing. In the process of viewing, (through the titling, hanging and construction) the *Paintject* sheds its layers of figuration, abstraction, picturing and the real. This dialogue between object and image serves to alter the way in which we comprehend a familiar object; thereby transforming our awareness and experience of it. Here the viewer is confronted with the magic of transformation and belief, enabling the real and the recognised to become something more.

The irony in this work is not in relation to painting's history but to a part of my own. It is ironic that the 'empty gesturings' I sought to avoid - the painting as effect - has led to this space where I characterise my paintings as *special effects* and *make up*.<sup>2</sup> However cosmetics and special effects have a function and intent; they are not always just about looking good but about

building upon a foundation so as to look a certain way, or to achieve a certain end. *Looking good* in the context of this project has an ulterior motive (of disguise) and that motive is in the end what separates this body of work from my previous investigations. I believe then that the ‘originality’ does not lie within the ‘appearance’ of this body of work but in how the ‘appearance’ has been achieved and contextualised.

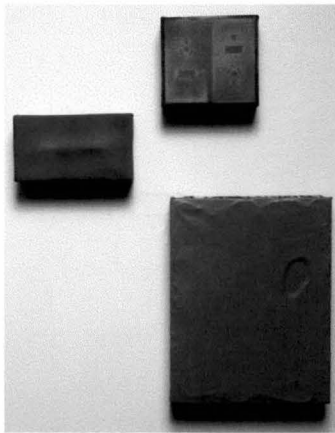


Fig.93,  
*MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS,  
 POWER POINT, CIGARETTE  
 AND RUBBER BANDS,*  
 Mixed media on canvas, power point,  
 cigarette and rubber bands,  
 50 x 40 x 4 cm overall, 1997.

Through its presentation of an object through the painterly recording of touch, this project can also be seen as an attempt to marry the imitative approach of painting to the indexical one of photography. However here the aim is not simply to capture the image of the object on the surface, but rather about morphing an object (within the painting construct), so as to create a space within which the definitions of both image and object are transformed and questioned.

The *Paintject* then presents the indeterminability (if not the meaninglessness) of both the problematics of the respective definitions and roles of painting, and of the objects themselves.

## Epilogue

The mass-produced objects and images that we bring into our lives and imbue with emotional value are imprinted with uniqueness by their very contact with us....<sup>3</sup>

In his 1950s play *The Glass Menagerie*, about a faded, ageing Southern belle, her shy, crippled daughter and her 'selfish dreamer' of a son; Tennessee Williams describes how the character Laura's '... separation increases until she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf.'<sup>4</sup> This description links Laura not just to the type and character of the glass objects that she owns, but also to the place and mode in which they are displayed.

Like Laura, we become the objects with which we associate, as our character and status are filtered through the material things that surround us. In this context, status and character become an owner/object collaboration as the owner creates the object whilst the object creates the owner. This process parallels the relationship between the artist and his/her work, as the artist creates things at the same time that he/she, as an entity, is created by the way in which these things are perceived.

'Their contact with us' then extends beyond the framework of the object and into the spaces within which we situate them, defining the border between the animate and the inanimate, not as a wall, but as an osmotic membrane where man and object cooperate in a universal language.

So maybe the imitation that is mimesis is not about a certain likeness, but about a flow, between ourselves and the stuff around us....

Maybe in order to understand who we are, we need only read the writing upon the objects with which we exist....

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*So where is all of this going?*

I think the aftermath of this MFA project will involve tackling a broad range of painting/object issues through a variety of disciplines, and I am excited by the possibilities.

The project's by-line is *to re-present object phenomena through the medium of painting*, however I have begun thinking more about object mechanisms – surfaces/labels commodity issues etc. – independent of paint, and even objects related to time.

I have recently had a series of works fabricated that were simply the words *USE BY* followed by the date that the work was to be exhibited.

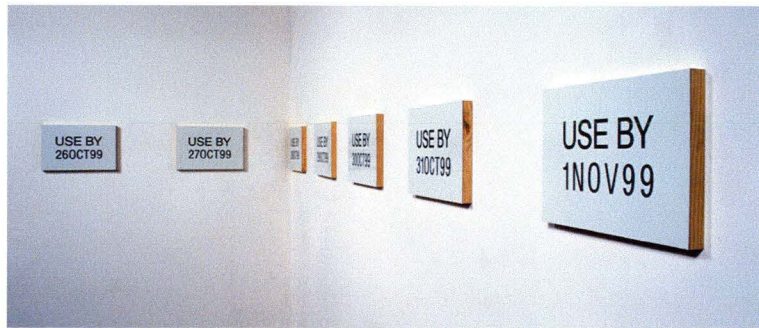


Fig.94,  
*GOING OFF*, Metal panels mounted on wood.  
Installation at Foyer Gallery, Hobart,  
Each panel 20 x 30 cm, 1999.

These works were less about negotiating the 'problems of painting' and more about raising questions about processes of viewing such as: Does an image have a shelf life?

In addition, I am also currently experimenting with alternative means of translating objects (at present birdcages) into pictures, through flattening them.



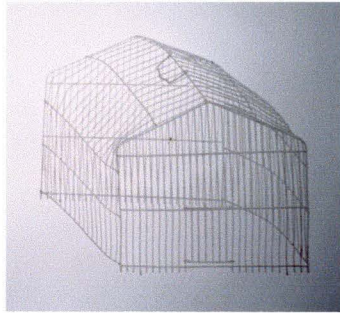


Fig.95,  
*FLAT BIRDCAGE*,  
Flat birdcage, 50 x 54 cm, 1999.

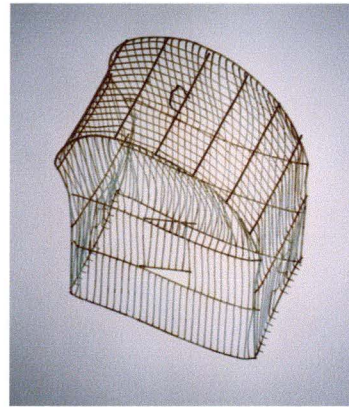


Fig.96,  
*FLAT BIRDCAGE*,  
Flat birdcage, 55 x 50 cm, 1999

Upon reflection,

painting has become within this project, a kind of Trojan  
horse...

a way of getting into an end that has become literally  
a new beginning.

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NOTES TO PAGES 91-97

CONCLUSION

THE END AS A BEGINNING

- 1        Batchelor, D , *Minimalism (Movements in Modern Art)*, London:  
Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, [p 15] See also note #5 in *How Does this Work Sit and What  
Do I Call It?/ Real Abstraction*
- 2        See note #5 in *Objects and the Domestic Surface/ Souvenir*

EPILOGUE

- 3        McCollum, A , Journal excerpt, source unknown
- 4        Williams, T , *The Glass Menagerie*, Character Outline
-

## Appendices:

### Other Works

These *Other Works* articulate the fringes of this project as they embody the points at which the *Paintject* could have evolved into something else.

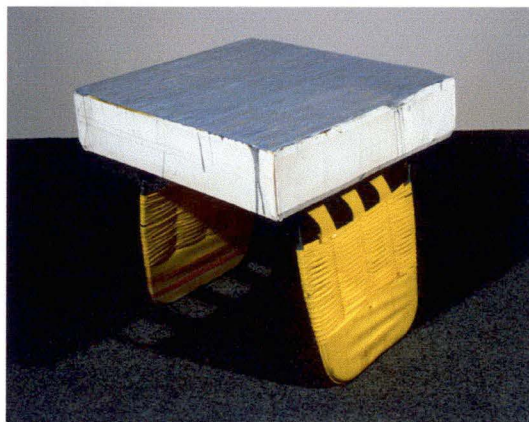


Fig. 97,  
*BREAD CRATE ON YELLOW  
BANANA LOUNGE*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas  
and crate and banana lounge,  
65 x 69 x 60 cm. 1999.

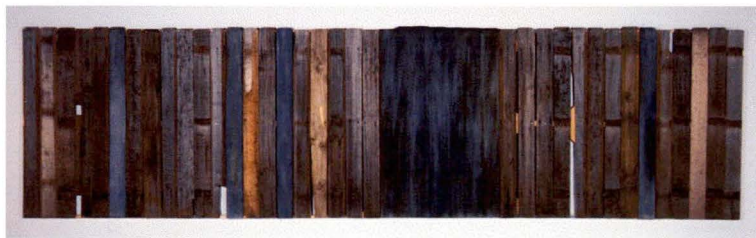


Fig. 98,  
*BREAD CRATE ON BLUE  
CHAIR*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas  
and crate and chair,  
74 x 70 x 60 cm. 1999.

With these works I was experimenting with other ways of displaying *Paintjects* so as to explore the anthropomorphic relationships between the objects. (The crate and furniture scale as body measures minus the body.)



Fig. 99,  
*FENCE PAINTING*,  
Acrylic on canvas and  
fence, 161 x 600 x 3 cm,  
1999.



At a distance, the exposed fence performs with the covered fence as a picture.

As this piece combines covered and uncovered objects (in this case fence palings), it ironically articulates a border of the project.

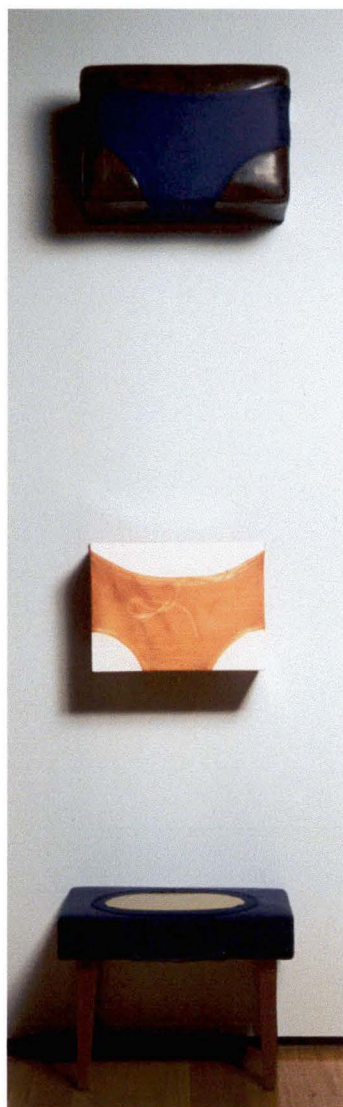


Fig. 100,  
*FUN BOY THREE*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas,  
swimming costumes, underpants, and  
pouffes, 192 x 44 x 30 cm, 1999.

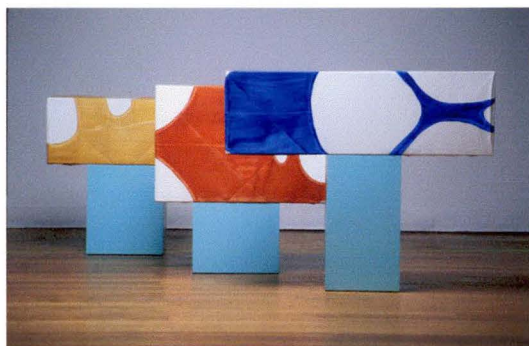
Like the previous work, *FENCE PAINTING*, this ensemble combines covered and exposed objects.

However humour, rather than ‘the picture,’ is the focus here.





Fig. 101,  
*FREE STYLE*,  
Acrylic and enamel on canvas,  
swimming costumes and plinths,  
75 x 100 x 180 cm, 1999.



This piece was my attempt to create a work for an international Olympic competition.

Although the work was not selected for exhibition, it provided me with a valuable opportunity to explore the *Paintject* as a sculptural component.



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Jasper Johns *FLAG (DETAIL)*, Encaustic, oil and collage on fabric, 107.3 x 154 cm, 1955.  
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## Biography

John Vella

- 1969 Born in Sydney.
- 1987/88 Completed 2 years of Architecture Degree,  
University of Technology Sydney.
- 1989/99 Travel/study tour,  
12 months in Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East.
- 1991/93 Diploma in Art (Distinction),  
National Art School, Sydney.
- 1993 Touring photographer for the band, *Midnight Oil*.  
Photographs published in *Juice*, *Rolling Stone*  
and *Time* magazines.
- 1994 Nominated Student Representative,  
TAFE Fine Arts Course Advisory Board.
- 1995 Studio in Italy, 4 months;  
Studied Italian at the University of Perugia;  
travelled in Europe, Asia and North Africa, 6 months.
- 1996 BFA Honours (First class);  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart.
- 1997 MFA, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer, Drawing/Painting,  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Guest Lecturer, National Art School (NAS), Sydney.  
Awarded Professional Development Grant, Arts Tasmania.
- 1998 MFA, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer, Drawing, TAFE, Hobart.  
Lecturer and co-organiser of the Summer School of  
Drawing, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer, Drawing & Painting,  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer and co-organiser of "Drawing Safari,"  
Winter School, NAS, Sydney.  
Lecturer, Tasmanian Art Teachers Conference,  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Awarded *Professional Development Grant*, Arts Tasmania.
- 1999 MFA, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer, Drawing TAFE, Hobart.  
Lecturer, Life Drawing, Friend's School, Hobart.  
Lecturer, Painting,  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer and co-organiser of "Drawing Safari II,"  
McGregor Winter School, USQ, QLD.  
Awarded *Artists Development Grant*, Arts Tasmania.  
Awarded *New Work Grant*, Australia Council.
- 2000 Submitted MFA,  
Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania.  
Lecturer, Painting, Centre for the Arts, Uni. of Tasmania.  
Appointed to board, Contemporary Art Services Tasmania  
(CAST).

**Education**

1997 - 00

MFA Painting,  
School of Art, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

1996 – 1997

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Honours (First class),  
School of Art, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

1991 -1993

Diploma of Fine Arts, (Distinction),  
National Art School, Sydney.

1987 - 88

Bachelor of Architecture,  
University of Technology, Sydney, (completed two years).

**Solo Exhibitions**

2000    *Going Off*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra.  
(Confirmed for July 2000)  
As yet untitled, Bett Gallery Hobart.  
(Confirmed for October 2000)

1999    *Going Off*, Foyer Gallery Hobart.

1997    *Object Poverty*, Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney.

1996    *Watch this Space*, Gallery Duncie, Hobart.

1994    *Untitled*, Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney.



## Mixed Exhibitions

- 2000 *Do Not Touch*, curated by Kelly Squires, CAST Gallery Hobart.
- 1999 *WARP*, curated by David Hansen, CAST Gallery Hobart.  
*Liquid Evasions*, curated by Jessica Ball and Anjanette Shaw, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart.  
*Sublime Absence*, curated by Renai Stoneley, Smith +Stoneley Gallery, Brisbane.  
*Duo*, Exhibition with Derek O'Connor, Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart.  
Hutchins Drawing Prize, Long Gallery Hobart.
- 1998 Selected to represent the Centre for the Arts at ACUADS Conference, Gallery 101, Melbourne.  
*Upbeat and Lively*, Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart.  
Hutchins Drawing Prize, Long Gallery Hobart.
- 1997 *House*, Entrepot Art Gallery, Hobart.
- 1996 *Three Artists*, Entrepot Art Gallery, Hobart.  
Finalist, NSW Travelling Art Scholarship exhibition, COFA, UNSW, Sydney.
- 1994 Finalist, NSW Travelling Art Scholarship exhibition, COFA, UNSW, Sydney.  
*Recognising the Republic*, Michael Nagy  
Fine Art Gallery, Sydney.  
Finalist, Lloyd Rees Memorial Youth Art award, ABC Centre, Sydney.
- 1993 Finalist, NSW Travelling Art Scholarship exhibition, COFA, UNSW, Sydney.  
Taylor Square Arts Festival Annual Art Prize, (Joint winner)  
TAP Gallery, Sydney.  
Selected as Painting representative, National Art School, Inter College Competition.  
Fishers Ghost Art Award, Judge's choice exhibition, Campbelltown City Art Gallery, NSW.

## **Collaborations**

2000 *6=9*, curated by Jessica Ball, CAST Gallery, Hobart.  
(Confirmed for August 2000)

1999 *BlindSpot*, 180 Collins Street, Hobart.

## **Articles/reviews**

1999 *Undiscovered, unmasked: Artists for a new millennium*,  
Article by Edward Colless, Australian Art and Collector  
Magazine April-June pp33-40.

*WARP*, review by Sally Rees, Artlink vl 19 #4, p.91.

*WARP*, exhibition essay by David Hansen.

*Do Not Touch*, exh. cat., essay by Kelly Squires.

*Liquid Evasions*, exh. cat., essay by Clifford Davey.

*Sublime Absence*, exh. cat., essay by Renai Stoneley.

1998 *Blindspot Go Looking*, in Real Time,  
Dec. 98 - Jan. 99, Diane Klaosen.  
ACUADS catalogue.

## **Grants**

1999 New Work Grant, Australia Council.  
Artists Development Grant, Arts Tasmania.

1998 Professional Development Grant, Arts Tasmania.

## **Represented**

Artbank

University of NSW.

Private and corporate collections around Australia.